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Contents

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

All Quiet on the German Front? George Gissing, the German Critic, and the German Soldier

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In his 1981 book *Gissing and Germany* Patrick Bridgwater describes George Gissing's lifelong enthusiasm for German literature.[1] He shows that in his youth he studied the German language deeply and read Goethe, Heine, Jean Paul (pseudonym of Johann Paul Friedrich Richter), Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche with intellectual fervour. Bridgwater's intention was to reveal the major influence of German literature and philosophy on Gissing. In this essay, by contrast, my aim is to briefly record Eduard Bertz's attempts to make Gissing's name known in Germany, and to document Gissing's reception in Germany during his lifetime and in the decades after his death.

Gissing and Germany informs us that although Gissing studied German at Alderley Edge and Owens College, his most intense preoccupation with its literature occurred between 1876 and 1882. Whilst in America, as Bridgwater notes, Gissing "taught German […] read a great deal of German (especially Goethe), worked on an article on Burns and Heine, and translated much of Heine's *Buch der Lieder* into English verse" with the aim of publishing the translation.[2] A year after his return to England he made the acquaintance of the German socialist, Eduard Bertz, who introduced him to Schopenhauer and later Nietzsche's philosophy. In the early 1880s, moreover, as his *Letters* reveal, he was even attempting to interest his siblings in German literature.

Bridgwater asserts that Gissing's knowledge of German, among Victorian writers, was only bettered by George Eliot, who had translated *Das Leben Jesu* into English, and George Meredith, who had spent two years at school in Germany from age fourteen. But Gissing was modest about his command of German, even though he was steeped in the literature to a degree that was astounding in an Englishman of his day. Morley Roberts remarks in his disguised biography of Gissing that "German […] was an open book to him, and he had read most of the great men who wrote in it, understanding even the obscurities of [Jean Paul's] 'Titan,'" that most impenetrable of German novels, which because of these obscurities was last translated into English in 1862.[3] In view of Gissing's early enthusiasm for Jean Paul, it is interesting to note that,

though Hermann Hesse greatly esteemed him and he is still held to be a classic author, he is little read in Germany now because his novels are difficult and full of elusive allusions.[4] Even in his own lifetime, despite huge popularity, the autodidact was regarded by Schiller and Goethe as the strangest and most baffling of authors. Schiller described him in a letter to Goethe as "fremd, wie einer, der aus dem Mond gefallen ist [as strange as someone who has fallen from the moon]."[5] Jean Paul is also remembered as one of the few early readers to recognise the value of Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, calling it "ein genial-philosophisches, kühnes, vielseitiges Werk [an ingenious philosophical, bold and versatile work]."[6] Schopenhauer was himself a great admirer of Jean Paul's writings, quoting from them throughout his life. Certainly, Schopenhauer's theory of humour leans heavily on Jean Paul's theory of the ridiculous. If Gissing came to Jean Paul, as Bridgwater states, through Carlyle, he may also have found a good many echoes when reading Schopenhauer. But, as Gissing barely mentions him in his writings, Bridgwater surmises that Jean Paul was not a key influence. Hence, in *Gissing and Germany*, he gives Jean Paul short shrift, devoting just one paragraph to him, elsewhere focusing on Goethe, Heine, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche.

After Bertz's return to his homeland in April 1884, Gissing had little chance to speak German or talk about German books. Although, in 1885 he sent Ellen a list of German writers to read, he thereafter avoided the topic in letters to his siblings because they had become resistent to his urgings to read the German classics, and also, as Bridgwater explains, because for Gissing himself "these appear to be references to past rather than present enthusiasms."[7] Even so, Gissing continued to read German books throughout the rest of his life (including Bertz's own three novels) and Russian and Scandinavian writers in German translations. Lastly, in stating that Gissing was remarkably well-read in German literature, Bridgwater regrets his never having read his contemporary Theodor Fontane, writing that "this is a pity, for his comments on Fontane, a sophisticated realist, would have been particularly interesting."[8] It is just as regrettable that he did not become acquainted with the stories of Heinrich von Kleist or the later tradition of the compressed German novella of poetic realism as exemplified by Theodor Storm, Paul Heyse, and Gerhart Hauptmann.

Arthur C. Young writes in his 1961 edition of their letters, "Throughout his years as a critic and journalist, Bertz did all that he could to bring Gissing's name before the German public, which did develop some interest in the Englishman's work."[9] Bertz's attempt to stir up interest in his works began in 1889 with an article for the *Deutsche Presse* entitled "George Gissing, ein Ideal-Realist."[10] In 1890, he reviewed *The Emancipated* for the journal.[11] A year later he translated the short story "Phoebe's Fortune" for *Aus Fremden Zungen*.[12] In the 1890s, due

to the attention Bertz brought to his work, some translators did contact Gissing. Yet, the only novels translated into German were *New Grub Street* by Adele Berger in 1891 and *Demos* by Clara Steinitz in 1892.[13] Berger's translation was not issued as a book but serialised in *Pester Lloyd*, the leading German newspaper in the Austro-Hungarian empire. She planned to translate both *Denzil Quarrier* (Gissing sent her a copy in March 1892) and later *Eve's Ransom*, while Friedrich von Oppeln-Bronikowski and Wanda von Sacher-Masoch showed interest in *The Odd Women*, but none of these translations ever materialised. Tauchnitz issued *New Grub Street* in 1891 for English readers, which stayed in print until 1930.[14] His other works of the 1890s, however, received no notice at all, except for his short story "The Day of Silence" which was translated as "Die vereinsamte Wohnung" (not recorded in Coustillas's *Definitive Bibliography*) in two parts in the Austrian *Arbeiter Zeitung* on 18 and 27 December 1895.

At the turn of the century, there was more response to his works, but Gissing would have been outraged to read in the 1900 edition of *Meyers Konversations-Lexikon*, following a reference to the realism of *The Crown of Life*, that "sein jüngstes Werk ist [his most recent work is] *A Secret of the North Sea*."[15] The next few years saw some positive reviews of his books in *Das literarische Echo*. After his death in December 1903, there were also some news items in periodicals including an obituary, and later, reviews of his posthumous works. 1908 then saw the first German-language dissertation devoted to the study of his fiction.[16] But for decades thereafter in the German-speaking countries, Gissing was the subject of just one journal article, a few dissertations, and briefly referred to in biographical lexicons, encyclopaedias, and histories of the English novel, most notably in Paul Neugebauer's study of Schopenhauer's influence on English literature.[17] By the late 1930s, his name meant nothing to Germans, except to a few scholars working on theses.

This short summary of Gissing's reception in Germany up to 1939 accounts for the works known to have concerned themselves with him. Thus, up to 1900, the only novels to be reviewed were *The Emancipated* by Bertz and the two issued by the German publisher Tauchnitz. Evidently, during the period from 1880 to 1939 few Germans ever came across Gissing's name or his books, and those few that did were chiefly German-speaking critics living in the literary worlds of London or New York or based in Berlin. Because only three of his books reached German bookshops, *Demos* in the continental English edition of 1886 and in the three editions of Clara Steinitz's translation between 1892 and 1893, and *New Grub Street* in the Tauchnitz edition of 1891, Gissing had no chance of becoming as well-known as, for instance, Rudyard Kipling, whose every work was promptly translated into German or made available in the English editions published by Tauchnitz or Heinemann and Balestier.[18]

II

Two decades ago the word "definitive" meant just that to most bibliographers or editors of complete editions of a writer's works, even if it was regarded by some scholars and readers as an imprecise, if not controversial, word. But since the advent of the Internet and the gradual mass accumulation online of books, newspapers, and periodicals in digitised form, the word has lost much of its authority or ability to intimidate. It is therefore scarcely surprising when making a determined search in the past for articles about or lost stories by a certain writer that the chance of finding something new increases – note the discovery of several "lost" stories by Somerset Maugham recently published in *English Literature in Transition*.[19] To aid searches, the Internet offers scholars the chance to read articles in magazines which were formerly only available in national libraries, or periodicals of which only a few copies are extant, or which by a seeming miracle have been discovered on the back shelf in an antiquarian bookshop, scanned, and digitised online. One recalls Wulfhard Stahl's good fortune some years ago when a random search online led him to the website of an Austrian bookseller where a lost file of *Das litterarische Echo* was offered for sale.[20] My search through German periodicals unearthed three substantial reviews of the Tauchnitz *New Grub Street*. I did not find any review of Clara Steinitz's 1892 edition of *Demos* or the two reprints. All three reviewers of *New Grub Street* address the novel with critical intelligence and are highly appreciative. I have translated the texts below:

J. Z., "*New Grub Street*. A Novel. By George Gissing. In 2 Vols. Leipzig, Tauchnitz, 1891 (Collection of Brit. Authors, Vols. 2729 and 2730)," *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 87 (1891), p. 313.

The title tells us the time and place of the novel: we are given scenes from present-day literary England which mainly leave the impression that the author shares Marie Corelli's exaggerated views, cited on p. 308 [printed below].

> There are two sides to literary London. On the one is a small 'grand stand' of successful journalists, novelists, and rhymers – who have either gratified the generally vulgar tastes of the half educated mass of people – or appealed to the goose-like sentiments of young ladies who never think seriously about anything but the dress and appearance of themselves and their rivals. On the other side is a large densely crowded plain, and there, what do we see? Genius crushed – energy misapplied, slow heart-breaking disappointment – poverty, starvation, and death. The profession of literature to any fresh aspirant may and often does mean slow torture and final execution. Better for some such to be clowns than poets – better, far better in many cases to sell bread and beef than write books. The masses of the people do not desire instruction, they want to laugh, to sneer, to gibe like monkeys at their own images drawn for them by hydraulic pressure from the pen of an exhausted caricaturist. Unhappy, misguided yet inspired fools, who think by hard running to overtake the swift horse called Popularity! In vain – it is an untamed steed, and some riders are no sooner mounted than

> they are overthrown! Literature is stripped of the regal garments she wore in ancient days, and stands like an outcast in rags, with a torn veil over her face, weeping for the Past.[21]

Gissing lets the only character bent upon outward success, Jasper Milvain say: "It is men of my kind who succeed; the conscientious, and those who really have a high ideal, either perish or struggle on in neglect." Yet Edwin Reardon does not go under because he has a high ideal, but because he has written himself out. The sketches of the various writers succeed brilliantly. The main role belongs to Reardon. Believing he can no longer live from his pen, he takes a menial job, and separates from his wife Amy: there is a reconciliation of sorts at their dying child's bedside, but Reardon dies soon after. Next to him, there is, above all, Jasper Milvain, the author of spicy articles about everything possible. At first, he loves Marian Yule, who helps her father with his literary research, and becomes engaged to her, when she inherits £5,000 from her uncle. But the inheritance soon shrinks to a smaller sum which she intends to leave to her parents, for whom she also believes she will have to care: so Milvain breaks the engagement, marries Amy, who has inherited £10,000, and becomes the editor of a respected magazine at the end. Of the other characters Biffen is also worthy of mention, the author of the realistic novel *Mr. Bailey, Grocer*: hopeless love for Amy robs him of all his love for life, and so he goes voluntarily to his death. At any rate these latter scenes do not seem to me adequately motivated, and I find the character of Amy is not sufficiently worked out.

S. Peter, "*New Grub Street*. By George Gissing. In two volumes. Tauchnitz Edition," *Beiblatt zur Anglia: Mitteilungen aus dem gesammten Gebiete der englischen Sprache und Litteratur*, Band 2:9 (15 February 1892), pp. 307-308.

Grub Street in London was the place where, if they were dependent on earning money, eighteenth-century English men of letters were to be found *en masse*, offering their laborious efforts to the bookshops for which they were paid badly. That similar conditions still exist in the Grub Street of today, indeed more so than ever, is shown very convincingly in the novel before us. Clearly, the novelist writes from his own experience, for only someone fully conversant with the business of modern literary production could give us a glimpse behind the scenes in the workshops of talented and less talented professional authors, in the publishing houses, and in the editorial offices of magazines. What we see there is interesting, but not pleasant. The fate of Edwin Reardon is movingly portrayed, a young man of little experience, who has had the good fortune or misfortune to write two or three excellent novels which were received with approval. In the delirium of his first success and in the certain belief that he will have a brilliant literary career he marries a spoiled girl without means.

Now he is expected to and has to write to support his family; but what he was able to do promptly and easily when he was single, he vainly struggles to achieve now that iron necessity prods at his back. Under nameless mental torments, to which soon physical suffering is added, he racks his brain in search of ideas for new works; however, his imagination has run dry, the promising talent vanished, and the wretched efforts his pen now produces fill the sensitive and well-educated man with contempt and disgust. Along with the physical and mental strain his work entails, next to which the lowest paid job would seem to him and to us a relief, it is, above all, his cold-hearted wife's reproaches that drive him completely towards disaster and despair. Embodying the exact opposite to this figure so worthy of compassion is his friend, Jasper Milvain, the modern professional writer and practical social climber, the man of 'skillful arts,' who has single-mindedly and decidedly planned his route to profitable success. He does not wrestle with ideals or immerse himself with enthusiasm in the enjoyment of true poetry. What does Jasper Milvain care about the inner worth of the works he writes, when it is only a marketable product, the proceeds of which will provide him with the good things of life – luxury, enjoyment, respect, and power? Besides, he does not deceive himself in his life accounting: trampling on the broken heart of the fiancée who loves him, the egoist acquires everything he desires, whereas Edwin Reardon, the poor dreamer and idealist, suffers awful shipwreck and goes under.

With sharp insight Gissing shows in every scene the influence of money on the development of character. For example, whilst he is occasionally insensitive and selfish, Jasper Milvain is nevertheless not a bad person in any respect. Simply because he is determined to avoid poverty at all cost and wants to escape deprivation, he suppresses all that his best in him; if he were rich, though he might not be noble, he would without doubt be an amiable, generous, in short, a highly tolerable companion. – All the characters in the novel, even the ones seen briefly, hold our interest owing to the true-to-life sketching; on the other hand, the pace of the plot drags slightly, the writing is often too verbose, and loses itself in the piling up of details.

J. P., "*New Grub Street*," *Allgemeine Konservative Monatsschrift für das Christliche Deutschland*, 22 (July-December 1895), p. 1005.

In England a realist movement in literature is also emerging. Readers are becoming tired of the extended form of the conventional novel and writers are appearing, who see it as their task to observe and depict the often inconspicuous incidents of daily life in order to find out where the modern world is headed. This kind of literature has already had its precursors in Dickens, in Eliot, in Kingsley, and remarkable talents are working now in the same direction to

approach the great problems of the day through strong diagnosis. The English consider George Gissing one of the best of these realists; indeed, a magazine remarked about him that England would wake up one morning noticing to its amazement that another Zola had arisen. Yet certainly not a second-rate Zola offering frivolous meat dishes, but more a writer, who, like the true Zola, knows how to observe real life and show its typical character.

The present novel describes English literary life and introduces every kind of English writer, with no idealist among them, nor writers of great name but such who write for the weeklies, the monthlies, and the quarterlies. Grub Street was the place, in former days, where the most editorial offices were – so the title makes it plain that this is not a story about poets but the lives of journalists. The story told in the novel is certainly interesting, but the most interesting parts are the sharply defined characterisations of the journalists and the finely observed scenes from their lives. Such a one is the young, yet shrewd and worldly-wise Jasper Milvain. He has set himself the goal of achieving success with his pen, so he writes what the great public wants to read. He is not a villain; on the contrary, he is surprised himself by his kindheartedness even when on occasion he can also be quite heartless. But each person is in the end concerned with himself and in the great race of life the main thing is to remain in front. He remains ahead: he marries a rich woman and becomes the editor of a leading journal; he has a large income and great influence: "No, I am far from a bad fellow. I feel kindly to everyone who deserves it. I like to be generous, in word and deed. Trust me, there's many a man who would like to be generous, but is made despicably mean by necessity […] I have much of the weakness that might become viciousness, but I am now far from the possibility of being vicious […] Happiness is the nurse of virtue […] and talk about my 'blessedness.' Ha! Isn't the world a glorious place?" This then is a man of letters who has been fortunate, but how many were not. There is Reardon for instance. A few novels have brought him decent remuneration, so he marries an ambitious, demanding girl without money and now writing becomes a matter of putting bread on the table. Suddenly the productive vein runs dry and for the work he struggles to produce he cannot find a publisher; poverty follows, the marriage falls apart, and finally he dies in a state of misery. Then there is the older Biffen. He is unpretentious, but the world does not know what to make of his peculiar books, and earning no more than a dry crust's worth, with his last money he buys himself poison with which he makes an end of his life. Next there is Alfred Yule, who sees enemies and jealousy everywhere. He sows and reaps hate, and as he finally goes blind, his daughter Marian supports him, the most tender and purest figure in our book, borne down by the burden of her dull

literary commitments. Many people are presented on the page, all linked to journalism and it is by no means an ideal reality which Gissing draws of this exalted power of our time. Why did he not give us a man of great and noble thoughts? Are there no other types, no better ones among all the English men of letters? That is the question that occupied me most whilst reading this book, and one other: is it any different in German literary circles? It would be sad, if also in Germany only vacuous mediocrity and vain striving for gain ruled the heads of our writers. Who will describe the German journalists for us, as Gissing has done for the English?

III

Unexpectedly, the early 1900s did see a few German-speaking critics show interest in Gissing's works. Two of these, Elisabeth Lee and Max Meyerfeld, contributed reviews of English books to *Das literarische Echo*. Lee, who was born in London in 1857, was the sister of Sidney Lee, the well-known critic and long-serving editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. After being educated at Queen's College, London, she became a schoolteacher. She also translated French and German works into English, wrote eighty biographies of notable women for the *DNB*, a memoir of the the novelist Ouida, and was the secretary of the *English Association* from 1907 to 1912. From the late 1890s, though based in London, she was the literary critic for several German publications. In *Das literarische Echo* she had a regular column entitled "Englischer Brief" where she summarised the contents of the English magazines, offering succinct comment on theatrical highlights and new fiction. For instance, in a short review in July 1901 she recommended *Our Friend the Charlatan* as a worthwhile read. In February 1904 she reported Gissing's death and wrote, "If Gissing chose to write about the dark side of life, it was because he realised that tragedy was more evident than comedy, and because he wanted to write about what he knew best. His writing partly owes a debt to Dickens and partly to Zola. Through his death English literature has suffered a great loss."[22]

The other critic, Max Meyerfeld, is, as we shall see, of far more importance to Gissing studies, even if he covered similar ground to Lee in *Das literarische Echo*, though in more depth, with his extensive book reviews. Surprisingly, he receives no mention at all in modern Gissing scholarship except for a brief reference to his February obituary by Pierre Coustillas in his recent Gissing biography, who writes: "In Germany, where Eduard Bertz hid his feelings in absolute public silence, Max Meyerfeld recalled the salient features of Gissing's works in *Das litterarische Echo* [*sic*], assisted by Elizabeth Lee, who drew attention to an article in *Die Nation* […]."[23]

Curiously, the article to which Lee drew notice, is one that no Gissing scholar seems to have read, not even Coustillas himself. This article, which appeared in *Die Nation* on 9 January 1904, was in fact an earlier and longer version of Meyerfeld's February obituary: and one that is so controversial in a disclosure about Gissing's private life that it is astonishing it was not bruited about in the English press of the day, *or* is it? One assumes that the English correspondents resident in Germany had also overlooked the earlier obituary, yet this is not so. For Harriet Lynch, the German correspondent for *Academy and Literature* wrote on 16 January 1904: "An excellent appreciation of George Gissing, by Dr. Max Meyerfeld of Berlin, appears in 'Die Nation' (January 9, 1904). The German critic writes most sympathetically, and testifies to a thorough understanding of the English novelist's point of view and purpose. We have not come across anything we like better from Gissing's English critics."[24] In view of these remarks, one assumes that Miss Lynch either did not look closely at the obituary or, more likely respecting Gissing's reputation, she chose to make no comment on Meyerfeld's revelation. This would be consistent with the prevalent tendency in that era to sweep potential scandal under the rug.

Besides writing two versions of the obituary, Max Meyerfeld was intensely occupied with Gissing's *oeuvre* from 1903 to 1905. One supposes that had Gissing lived longer, he might have cultivated a greater interest in his work in Germany. Indeed, Gissing could not have found a more sympathetic and responsive reader of his novels, other than Eduard Bertz, in northern Europe. This is supported by the fact that in 1902 Meyerfeld had translated a number of short stories by George Moore, the Irish realist, and edited and introduced a translation of *Esther Waters* in 1904.[25] In the first twenty odd years of the century they kept up a correspondence of 125 letters on each side. This led to the German translating up to 1928 an almost constant stream of Moore's works, including three of his novels.[26] During this same period, because of the interest Meyerfeld aroused in Moore's works, there were many other translations into German of his major novels and poetry, whilst his books were often prominently reviewed in German newspapers and periodicals. Gissing, by contrast, was accorded scarcely any further notice in the German press after the last of his posthumous novels, *Will Warburton*, appeared in the summer of 1905. And because the well had almost run dry, Meyerfeld wrote nothing more about him after this time. But how, in the first place, did the young critic become so interested in and knowledgeable about English literature in an era when the majority of his German peers obstinately held to the view that in Émile Zola's vanguard only French writers such as Paul Bourget, Maurice Barrès, Léon Bloy, Anatole France, Octave Mirbeau, and Joris Karl

Huysmans, among many others, produced morally liberated, thought-provoking, and innovative contemporary fiction?

To find the answer to this question we must take a look at the German critic's life. Max Meyerfeld was born on 26 September 1875 in Giessen, a small town to the north of Frankfurt am Main. His father, Levi, was a Jewish small trader of agricultural products. Both parents had died by 1887 when Meyerfield was adopted by Sarah (his mother's sister) and Max Friedberger (his father's brother), who had married each other in the 1870s, and had two boys of their own. He was schooled from age six and in 1885 entered a gymnasium in Giessen specialising in humanist studies. There he learned Latin and Greek, but not French or English. He passed the school-leaving examination in April 1894 and enrolled at his home university in order to study modern philology. At the time this meant studying German, English, and French along with philosophy and the history of art. But after one semester, having failed miserably in English, he gave up his studies. This was to be the making of Meyerfeld. In no way dejected by his failure, which he blamed on the provincialism of Giessen and the poor teaching of the academic staff, he moved to Strasbourg (then a part of Germany).

DR. MAX MEYERFELD

On 24 October 1894 Meyerfeld enrolled at the famous Kaiser Wilhelms University intending to study English philology under Alois Brandl (1855-1940) then the leading expert on English literature in Germany. The Austrian, just like Meyerfeld, had himself struggled with English in his student days at Vienna. In 1879, having just written his doctoral thesis, he went to London where he met the renowned co-founder of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Frederick Furnivall, who shortly after said to Henry Sweet, the philologist and role model for G. B. Shaw's Henry Higgins in *Pygmalion*, "What a shame about young Brandl, who has just visited me; he seems to be industrious, but he speaks such terrible English that he will never be able to become a professor." Yet, within five years, Brandl became Professor of English at the University of Prague. In 1888 he obtained a post at Göttingen and in 1892 acquired a full professorship at Strasbourg. He would become a noted expert in Shakespearian studies and American literature in the next four decades. Under Brandl, Meyerfeld took courses on "Shakespeare and His Precursors," on Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, and on the history of English grammar divided into three parts: Old English, Middle

English, and Modern English. He also attended classes in cultural studies on London, Ireland and Wales, and, most importantly, "Living English Writers," all taught by the native English lecturer, Dr. Thomas Miller (who made a name for himself editing works for the Early English Text Society). Meyerfeld had an extra course in music, an area in which he also excelled – in later years, alongside his work as a literary and theatre critic, he was a fine music critic. In 1896 he won a prize for an essay about Robert Burns, the subject also of an essay by Gissing at Owens College, on whose poetry he wrote his thesis two years later.

Meyerfeld had already started to work as a literary critic in 1895, publishing in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and *Die neue Rundschau*. In 1902 he moved to Berlin where he met Alfred Kerr (1867-1948), the renowned German theatre critic – they would remain close friends for over thirty years. By the time of the First World War Meyerfeld was highly respected as a translator of, besides George Moore, Shakespeare's *Othello*, and works by Oscar Wilde and John Galsworthy.[27] His translation of Wilde's *De Profundis* was serialised in January/February 1905 in *Die neue Rundschau* and the book appeared a fortnight before the first English edition. In 1912 he wrote a play, *Robert Anstey*, whose hero is based on Wilde.[28] A year later, *The Bookman* referred to Meyerfeld as the foremost German critic of English literature.[29]

A photograph taken inside Berlin Zoo on 8 September 1927 on the occasion of Siegfried Sassoon's 41st birthday. From left to right: Osbert Sitwell, Max Meyerfeld, Sassoon, Nellie Burton, Sacheverell Sitwell. (National Portrait Gallery 2018)

After the war Meyerfeld also translated works by Siegfried Sassoon and Osbert Sitwell, both of whom he met on occasion in Berlin.[30] He was still working as a critic when the Fascists came to power in 1933. Soon after, the National Socialists banned him from working. Kerr had meanwhile fled Germany for France before finding a home in London. Meyerfeld remained in Berlin. On 3 October 1940 he went to visit the Berlin Zoo opposite Bahnhof Zoologischer Garten and was prevented from entering by a Nazi soldier who informed him that Jews were no longer allowed entry. Just before this he had written to Alfred Kerr's daughter, Judith, that "The more I see of men, the more I love animals." He then returned to his flat and committed suicide. Such is the sad ending of the first German literary critic to fully appreciate Gissing's novels.

[I have translated every article and review Meyerfeld wrote about Gissing between 1903 and 1905, all of which are incisive, opinionated, and entertaining: they appear below in chronological order. Meyerfeld's first essay explains how the majority of German critics viewed English literature around 1900. It provides a rich context for Bertz's situation, emphasising the difficulties opposing him in his own attempt to promote Gissing's name in a Germany mainly hostile to modern English writers.]

"Literarische Anglophobie," *Frankfurter Zeitung, Erstes Morgenblatt*, No. 291 (20 October 1903), pp. 1-3.

"If I had the time," a well-known university professor wrote to me recently, "I would write a book about Morris, Yeats, Moore, Wilde, Olive Schreiner, and Kipling among others 'On the Originality of Modern English Literature.' Our nation knows absolutely nothing about the wonderful inventiveness of the English across the Channel. And once the book was written, one might ask, would the ruling prejudice against English literature be shaken? A prejudice which has become a rigid part of a superficial education! Is it the case then that the effect of a book can be seriously overrated despite promising to change opinions? For, today, when political and commercial interests have become the guiding and grievous motive of our public life, even a good book of purely literary origin has not only a limited readership but also only a faint echo. The writer's voice fades away like that of the prophet in the desert. It succumbs to the overpowering dominance of the unbelievers. It engages with an intangible, one-hundred-thousand strong enemy: habit. What is one person capable of achieving when every day for many, many years it has been repeated loudly and maliciously that England no longer counts in the realm of the creative arts, has lost its seat and vote in the congress of literature. Aesthetic prejudices lose their hold when they depend on personal antipathy: that is to say, when one tilts at windmills. – *That* is what needs to be said …"

This letter reminded me of an essay I once chanced upon in a journal which began with the solemn sentence: "English literature is in a state of complete collapse." Whether this is the case to a greater or lesser extent, does not matter. People are shouting it from the rooftops: art is dead in the land of Shakespeare for there are no more poets. Yet the man who wrote that sentence published a fat history of English literature fifteen years ago; a harmless soul may therefore assume that he possesses a sounder knowledge of the subject than the majority of people whose opinions are influenced by hearsay. Sure enough in his next sentence he makes the admission: "In earlier periods one could reveal the most salient features of the inner development of English literature, today one cannot distinguish a single feature." Not even one? Of course, it is premature to conclude from a single person's opinion that it is a universal view. Yet, in Germany, researchers, who lose themselves in the past and know nothing about the present or sometimes don't want to know anything about it, are no rarity.

Thus, little can be done to change the fact that Germany regards modern English literary productions with disdain; especially the dramatic literature, which, I readily admit to those who belittle it, no eulogist can gloss over. What the Thirty Years War meant for the prosperity of Germany, the English Civil War meant for the British stage. It was struck to the very marrow and has never really recovered from this blow: not even up to the present day. If, for a long time now, no one openly rages against this "devil's whore," there still is a bitter dislike of the theatre in large sections of the population comparable to the anti-Semitism which still smolders under the surface of our society. Moreover, it was regarded as a misfortune that the drama in England had already reached its high point at the turn of the seventeenth century. Are we to suppose that the dramatic arts will never return to the heights where the English greats once set up camp – one need only add Greek sculpture and Italian painting to the list to strengthen such an assertion –, if so: woe to the victors! When Jakob Ayrer [c. 1543-1625] forged his rough tragedies in Germany, William Shakespeare created the most artistic dramatic works to which we still look up at today as to sacred mountain peaks. Such a superhuman predecessor oppresses his successors like a crushing weight. Measured against such a tremendous giant, his imitators shrink in comparison. What is more, they are separated by moral and social barriers. The explication of these points here would cover too much ground. It suffices to say that today on the other side of the English Channel insurmountable obstacles stand between the theatre and literature. In the most favourable view we have pleasing, entertaining dramas, and an undemanding public. But not a hint of the modern *Weltanschauung* is permitted to enter the sealed-off auditorium.

That may rightly provoke scorn from the more advanced German. But he is too hasty in associating the English theatre with its literature. He makes this

excusable mistake because he himself often gets all his artistic satisfaction from the theatre stage. The lyric and the epic are for him simply non-existent in England and even if they did exist it would not change his opinion. In former days people read English novels in Germany, enthused about Charles Dickens and were moved to tears by Tennyson's "Enoch Arden." Today, possibly, the only writer people admire is the Anglo-Indian, Rudyard Kipling. A thick line is drawn under his name: his only. The novels which occasionally reach us through the intervention of a daily newspaper are unlikely to alter the less than respectful estimation of our countrymen. The translators also usually make do with importing practical commercial successes, and prefer to limit themselves to literary zeros, whilst their knowledge of English often deteriorates.

Until the outbreak of the Boer War there was no need to think of English literature with any hostility at all. There was only ignorance or – what is often worse still – poor knowledge. But when it became fashionable to talk badly about the perfidious world conquerors, then the spirit of supremacy took on a deceitful aftertaste. The amusing Albion; the country of shopkeepers that no longer produces poets; political imperialists and literary galley slaves; these phrases resounded on every street. I myself could never be converted to the wise saying of good, old Gray, that ignorance is bliss, and the root of all evil is ignorance. Both nations have their fill of such people; in both countries they reach far beyond the borders of the literary sub-districts. Yet there is a difference in that the English make no secret of it. The Englishman conceals his lack of language skills. The German on the other hand brags about his linguistic schooling and thinks this alone qualifies him to judge. The contempt with which he now regards his English cousins may have something to do with political reasons. One also sees it as a reaction to an excessive admiration, which was ever present, particularly in north Germany, well into the 1870s. Be that as it may, one does the English wrong out of ignorance. To understand a foreign culture one must occupy oneself continuously with the condition of the people's lives, and, especially, to understand the literature, one must study the social world, what people do or don't do. I agree with my correspondent who expresses the current situation plainly and simply: "Our nation knows absolutely nothing about the wonderful inventiveness of the English across the Channel."

It will be necessary in this essay first to show what the Germans know about contemporary English literature, and then what they don't know. Sadly, the first part will be very short, the second part by contrast excessively long.

The best-known writer in Germany is – I mentioned him before – Rudyard Kipling. While he was not discovered in the usual way, he owes this privileged position undoubtedly to his positive qualities: inexhaustible imaginative powers, a realistic narrative technique, a thoroughly sharp eye for the character of

people and things. His art of storytelling encompasses the world. He is just as much at home in the Indian jungle as he is in the megacities of America and the ancient world. *The Five Nations* [1903], the title of his recent poetry collection deserves to hang under his picture. Even so, he is by no means an international globetrotter who shows off the results of his travels. His ambition to be a *poeta propheta* he enjoys in the role of a strict apostle of imperialism, while his lively temperament does not shy away from political tactlessness. A differentiated European soul is discoverable in his erotic works. In him the twentieth century greets its first herald. Behold the man!

Who do I name in second place? Based on fairness – Jerome K. Jerome, an odd fellow who sometimes shines in comic profundities; but only sometimes. The English may turn their nose up at him: for Jerome is read in our country where he is revered as a representative of British humour. The cynical craftsman with his Croesus chest of anecdotes, the black humour of Dickens, has many friends in Germany, but at home no more than Julius Stinde [1841-1905: author of comic stories set in Hamburg and Berlin]. He remains an amusing number in literary variety: a Litke Carlsen of the pen [Berlin comedian].

The third member on our list added just recently is a writer who died three years ago, but has been dead for eight years, Oscar Wilde. I am proud to say that in 1895 in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* I was the only person in the whole of Germany to forecast the resurrection of Wilde, the man who was "buried alive." Today one cannot open a single newspaper without seeing his name. Some praise, others insult him, according to their predisposition. The father of Überbrettl [a super-cabaret near Berlin Alexanderplatz founded by Ernst von Wollzogen (1855-1934) in 1901] stigmatised him as an artistic fop (which he almost certainly was) and forgot to add that never before has a writer inspired an aesthetic culture more than he. Who will try to explain him historically?

Yet another Irishman seems destined to earn praise: George Bernard Shaw, half a philosopher, a quarter charlatan, and the rest a clown. It would be premature to make an exact prognosis about him before his self-glorifying comedies have been taken off the stage.

With this quartet of individual talents the main gallery of writers appreciated in Germany is complete. All that remains are the rejected or a group of unfortunates. Only thus can one describe sentimental rubbish such as *Little Lord Fauntleroy* [a children's novel from 1885/1886 by Frances Hodgson Burnett]. One does not need the assurance of mass circulation to prove that the public is captivated by books with a religious moral. One sees that the colourful booty which people bring home with them from their travels is scarcely worth mentioning; compare this now with our export, for our bank accounts reveal a considerable balance. It would be worth finding out in detail

how each popular English writer acquired a German readership. Such a study would belong in a chapter on the ethnography of success. One can formulate the following sentence as a general rule: the great writers always find readers no matter what they write, the middling writers because of their nationality; the former cast a spell, the latter arouse interest in foreign countries.

Now to the others: the unknown or underestimated writers who no German critic considers even when he ridicules the literary drought in England. Should we regret the fact that they are unable to gain a foothold in the German literary marketplace? Certainly not, as our market is already flooded with foreign books; for ages now, we Germans have had to face the reproach that, while we unduly neglect our own authors, we leave the door wide open for foreign writers. In any case the ground at present is not properly prepared for English writers to prosper here. It is because of this that one bewails the injustice of chance, since the masses, if they were really able to cultivate a critical eye and impartially appreciate English writers, would surely revise their doom-and-gloom view of English letters. Under the prevailing situation these writers are, it seems fortunate that they are neither subject to German boastfulness and malice, nor to ignorance. Only one writer is secure from this: Algernon Charles Swinburne. He is not yet of biblical age, but already seems like a historical personality; like a planet revolving around the sun that is Byron; like a crusading knight in Shelley's Hellenistic retinue. To seek him among the mortals is akin to blasphemy. The poetry securing him a claim to immortality belongs to an earlier time ("Atalanta in Calydon" 1865*!*). What is this guest from literary Olympus doing on this trembling earth that cries to Heaven in search of truth; this Alexandrian wonder beside Zola and Ibsen? Euphorion put the lyre in his hand and the Pre-Raphaelites tuned it for him. His harp has three strings: life, death, and beauty. Though life, death, and beauty are not lasting melodies, they will soon adorn the plinth of his memorial. His melancholy song, which was formerly drenched in Dionysian ecstasy, now sounds very slight; it has lost its resonance. And this noble poet is still among us? It is a quirk of fate …

Now for the novel, the second glorious branch of English literature! Our literature has recorded its past in golden letters. Our classic writers spoke of the English novelists with pure admiration and unalloyed veneration: of Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, Goldsmith up to Walter Scott; the names keep coming. Each one has left his mark on German literature. Goethe, Herder, Wieland, Jean Paul, all owe a debt to the English novel, and all of them have paid it off grandly. The eighteenth century was the era of a manifest Anglomania. The end of the nineteenth century has provoked an Anglophobia just as manifest. Truly, one may say, the label stamped "Made in England" has the same stigma for novelistic works as the label stamped "Made in Germany" has for industrial articles.

The two nations have drifted far apart in their way of thinking. Yes, modern philosophy has received a strong impetus from England, but its literature was closed off from its influence. Whereas we, alongside other countries and especially France, grapple with all the questions which we embrace under the headword *Weltanschauung* in our serious literature, in England the Cerberus of prudery stands guard in order to prevent harmful doctrines from spreading to its readers. The old puritan spirit is alive or better said: British conservatism resists subversive ideas. Hence – it cannot and should not be denied – English literature seems in many ways behind the times. On the stage difficult social and religious problems are at once avoided because they would otherwise be outlawed by the sharp-eyed, touchy censor. Up to now only a few authors have succeeded in smuggling them into a novel. How much longer will this childish policy of hushing up this fairy tale for adults continue? The day will come when the man-made, blocked-up reservoir will burst forth with full might over the country and smash every dam in its path. Where English letters still preserve a certain standard, this can be expressed as the law of the conservation of power: what the great ancestors sowed, their successors reap; the old culture stands everyone in good stead. It grows in the lowest of men and they draw on its boundless capital. What we yearn for and strive for, is in England via tradition a sacred *chose du commun*.

Meanwhile France has taken the lead without any difficulty in the realm of literary fiction. The modern novel delights in new forms. We Germans acquired our literary technique from the French, which has always been the Achilles heel of the English novel from Laurence Sterne to Thackeray. The French are the masters of succinct composition. Such an epoch-making novel as Zola's *Germinal* is an absolute masterpiece and stepping-stone in the development of literature. We can also doubtlessly attribute the prevailing presence of sex in the novel to French influence. Romance is the great driving force in the fictional universe. Here too English prudery could not take the lead. The Anglo-Saxon in contrast to the French reins himself in when writing about sexual matters. It is against his nature to reveal *in toto* the relations between the sexes and to uncover the ideal. He would rather permit sins which arise out of reflection than out of passion. But lately, even in England, authors are daring to make forays into naturalistic erotic. Thomas Hardy practically proved this in his last novel *Jude the Obscure*; Bernard Shaw approached it theoretically in his last ingenious play *Man and Superman*. – Yet I run the risk, if I linger any longer on the deficiencies of English literature, of confirming the detractors in their foolish undervaluation of it. From the start it was my aim to interpret the signs of the times and to trace their reasons. Now fairness demands that we come up with something positive to say about the English novel. Who is there worthier to start with than the old

master, George Meredith? Ah! Meredith! Who can define him? His style is a chaotic illumination of lightning strokes. As a writer he has complete control of his material, but not his use of the language; as a novelist he can do everything except tell a story; as an artist he is perfect but vague. Someone in Shakespeare – I think it was the fool in *As You Like It* – speaks of a man who constantly laughs at his own jokes; it occurs to me that this could serve as the basis for dealing critically with Meredith's art. He cannot truly be better characterised, unless one were to describe him as the Robert Browning of prose. Equally, this defines the limit of his appeal for the future. Such a chaotic style, which readily surprises his native readers at every turn, spoils the rendering of the story. As far as I know no one has ever tried to explain George Meredith. A Schlegel in prose must arise who would dare to attempt such a task. No foreigner could judge him competently; and the English have so long denied the cool epigrammatist, the incarnate psychologist, any recognition *that* they now think they have to make up for this by truly venerating the old man.

Thomas Hardy stands next to Meredith as [Ernst von] Wildenbruch next to [Christian Friedrich] Hebbel. He comes from Dorsetshire and has mixed country air with country milk. Wessex is his scene; pastoral idylls (*Far from the Madding Crowd*) and tragedies (*Tess of the D'Urbevilles*) in novelistic dress are his favourite genres. He has popularised the English farmer like Meredith ennobled the aristocrat. In a nutshell: a regional writer; great in his genre; but that genre is small. The same can be said of all those modest writers who make a virtue of necessity in the small world they inhabit. If Hardy were to find readers here, he could put an end to the weak notion that the only true regional literature is German. Remarkably, the writer of cheery country life in his novels, is an obsessive and bitter pessimist in his poetry. The cruelty of nature and the sympathy for the human pawns of fate occupy him in his old age. How bleak does the winter seem after these autumn reminiscences!

George Gissing imparts to his readers a completely opposing perspective. Hounded by an adverse fate, he has grimly cursed the morning of his life, recording his tragicomedy with painful relish: now that an insidious illness leaves him but little time, he has come to terms with his past like a victor and taken the path of quiet resignation (*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*). At the end of the nineteenth century the best critic of Dickens was himself a Dickens of the middle classes; admittedly a Dickens without humour who longed for Zola's universality (*Demos*). More completely than Meredith and Hardy, who so often hid their personalities in aesthetic illusion and consciously kept themselves apart from their fiction, Gissing combined experience and writing. His novels are self-confessional, judgemental (*New Grub Street*). He studied the people and despising them, found himself.

George Moore contends with him for precedence, being also a thorough realist and as a born Irishman full of sympathy for the suffering of every man, for the misery of mankind, though lately gripped by the tribulations of his own people. Hence, he has become the glorifier of simple beauty in the lower depths of Irish society, the voice of internal anguish and sorrow (*Esther Waters*). Life is: to set one's face against fate and to succumb to it wanly. Those who love life, like him, and renounce it, like Evelyn Innes, are particularly dear to him. He is a born fighter who sees in religion, especially in the oppressive will of the Catholic Church, the deadliest enemy of the human race. Away from Rome! he exclaims, but this is no present solution; more than a battle cry, it is an inner experience for him (*The Untilled Field*). Yet, sadly, his patriotism has also made him turn away from England, the protestant stronghold. Moore is the groundbreaker alongside whom the Irish secessionists fight. The gentlest of these is William Butler Yeats. He has been called the Irish Maeterlinck; clearly such names please the public, even if the critic does not know what to make of the comparison. But I don't want to cause confusion with a long list of further names, for John Davidson, Maurice Hewlett, and A. E. W. Mason do not deserve to be ignored. English literature is after all not in as sad a state as the critics would have us believe. It does not attract us with dazzling forms like French literature; it does not captivate us with new ideas like Scandinavian literature; it does not impress us with high flights of the imagination and profundity like German literature: yet whoever knows its past need not be ashamed of modern English literature; and I am not at all afraid for its future. With this in mind: England forever!

[Meyerfeld saw many English writers on his trips to London, including Austin Harrison (Gissing's former pupil). It was Harrison who told him Gissing's life story and passed on to him the biographical errors so often met in works written after his death. In this article Meyerfeld makes the disclosure about Gissing's private life which partly anticipates Morley Roberts by eight years.]

"George Gissing," *Nation*, Bd. 21, Nr. 15 (9 January 1904), pp. 233-235.

It was at a Literary Society dinner. I sat next to young Mr. [Austin] Harrison, the son of Frederic Harrison. He told me his father – at seventy – was now trying for the first time to write a novel [*Theophano: the Crusade of the Tenth Century* (1904)] … I don't know what train of thought suddenly led me to ask if he could tell me something about George Gissing; but I know very well why this writer meant so much to me at that time.

I made his acquaintance late – much too late, when I think how we occupy ourselves for a time with a generally unimportant writer, simply because we came across him by chance. And, for God knows how long, that same chance withholds from us others, who can give us so much more. In reality we have a

very personal relationship with all artists; or if not with all, then with those whom we love, in whose works we find a kindred spirit. But in this circle of feelings, it is difficult to be objective. For, having once missed out on getting to know a remarkable person, we find it hard to make up for this lack. One's innate resistance is also a part of the problem. I believe that, without wanting to, we gradually develop a slight bias, a certain feeling of malice towards the person. We wanted to know him for so long but couldn't, so that when we are able to, we no longer want to. Everyone of us, who writes professionally about literature or art, has such a list of people he stubbornly overlooks. The one refuses to recognise Mendelssohn, the other Hölderlin.

In short, I knew nothing about George Gissing except his name. Yet he was always an author I planned to read. Then one day his last book *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* was sent me from England. I overcame the uneasy feeling of acquainting myself with a writer through his last work, and began to read. Hardly had I read twenty pages, when it became clear that I had entered into a personal relationship with the author: his humanity had revealed itself to me. He struck chords that echoed in me; he awakened familiar moods; he enlivened my loneliness. He did not need to persuade me, he convinced me. His remarks about all the sorrow that burdens one's breast, about all the joy that lifts one's heart, touched me deeply. Above all, his love for England did not need to ask for mine in return. The more I read, the more I realised: here speaks a man who has retired from life, completely retired; who has made peace with the world; a man who has been hit hard by the sorrows of existence: a sufferer. He watches from his lofty hermitage the distant crowd of foolish men, who fight against each other in a constant struggle of man against man, not with the bitterness of Zarathustra but with a mild smile; not with the arrogance of a man who despises others in order to make a cult of himself, nor with the cynicism of a man despising himself in order to despise others. Here speaks a man full of understanding who is fully justified in using that hackneyed phrase of Terence's "nothing human is alien to me." Yet, because he understands everything, he is careful not to forgive everything. Because he has tasted the cup of woe to the full, because he could not sit among the fortunate at the table of life owing to the accident of his poor background, but had to do without dainty morsels, he has inwardly accepted the lack of such luxuries, and still remained open to the comforts of life. His soul has sought solace in itself. In this revival, beyond hope and waiting, a new belief in man and a deeper love of nature has thrived in him. By moving closer to nature in his rural leisure, he has distanced himself from mankind. He will become the true hermit, happy in himself. Now his circle of friends will no longer disturb him …

It is at once obvious: Henry Ryecroft, who has voluntarily retired after many disillusioning years slaving away as a writer, the world-weary Ryecroft now reposing in the *vita contemplativa* is George Gissing. The fictive disguise of a confessional narrative does not hide its autobiographical qualities. It may be to the taste of the British reading public: for in England everyone enjoys it when the author hides himself in his works or at least masks himself. Already, through this need for openness, this evident need to merge the fictional and the real, to merge them into an inseparable mixture, this Rousseauian note, which Goethe, inspired by the omnipotence of the personality, raised to a keynote of artistic creation, essentially and advantageously differentiates Gissing from the majority of English pen pushers. He would not have felt comfortable in the role of a writer following public taste, neither would he have lowered himself to become an aesthetic crowd pleaser in the same line as a producer of entertainments.

Why wonder then that George Gissing was denounced as the apostle of pessimism by his fellow countrymen; that they branded him a thoroughgoing realist – such bold as well as embarrassing comparisons cannot easily be forgotten – and applied to him the taint of being the English Zola? The optimistic side of this most healthy of nations reared up and turned itself away from him. All modern English literature is an illuminated manifesto for the unswerving belief in the victory of the good; Browning, Carlyle, Ruskin have all carried the flag before him, acted in the same way as proselytes. In their day pessimism was already a lost cause. Youths who have fallen out with God and the best in their world may pass through this beneficial transitional stage; the mature man looks back at his youthful misdeeds with a smile from the harbour of secure existence. But when an old man like Thomas Hardy entrenches himself doggedly in pessimism, this arouses at most compassion. Perhaps George Gissing suffered from his reputation; his books have done certainly, since they have only found limited favour with readers seeking amusement. They then welcomed the change in his way of thinking – the milder, well-tempered sentimentalism of his *Henry Ryecroft* – with joyful content and turned his last work into the success, which they had denied the earlier efforts of his honest pen.

Henry Ryecroft's melancholic change towards gentle resignation, a book now become George Gissing's swan song, seemed to me to be due to or hastened by external circumstances. I had a suspicion that he had a broken wing, that he could no longer take flight. And this was sadly confirmed. My dinner companion said to me at that time, George Gissing's days were numbered; the dangerous condition of his lungs did not permit him to live in foggy England; he took himself off to a seaside town in the South of France, a doomed man. On the 28 December he died there (in St. Jean-de-Luz).

Even more than the writer Mr Harrison praised the man. Gissing had been his tutor. He knew the harsh fate that had hunted down this noble person. As a young man he had got himself involved with a common female, a washerwoman, who he later married out of decency. The turbulent marriage, which forced the promising writer to take on menial work and led to his banishment from the society of his peers, had the conceivably most favourable outcome: she, the woman he had picked up off the street, returned to her natural element. The embodiment of these experiences are to be found in the novel *Thyrza* (1887). Furthermore, my friendly dinner companion especially commended the introductions Gissing wrote for the so-called *Rochester Edition* of Charles Dickens's works. Here Dickens, who was slowly beginning to pay his tribute to time, acquired his first modern, impartial critic (I recall that this work on its appearance in England had no lack of detractors).

George Gissing was born on 22 November 1857 in Wakefield, the Yorkshire factory town made known to us by Oliver Goldsmith's immortal idyll. He received his education at Owens College in nearby Manchester and later entered, if I am not mistaken, the University of Oxford. At twenty-seven he published his first book. The title *The Unclassed* (Die Klassenlosen) is a signpost at the entrance to his career. From the start his sympathies belonged to the disinherited, to the outcasts, the stepchildren of fate. They came to mean so much to him. He did not follow the fashion prevailing among the novelists of his country, to flatter the capitalists, to show respect to rank and dignity. Hence he could not rightly succeed in portraying the rich, the self-seeking, or those luxuriating in luxury, like Dickens and Anzengruber [(1839-1889): Austrian writer] could, or they remained pale imitations on the page, whereas he gradually became the best authority on the lower middle classes in England. As Thackeray puts it, why should "those who are teeming down there" be less suitable as heroes of novels? Merely because the public would rather look inside palaces than inside hovels, would rather sunbathe in sunshine than freeze in rags? No, happiness – as Gissing teaches us – is spread evenly in all social classes:

> The life of the very poorest is a struggle to support their bodies; the richest, relieved of that one anxiety, are overwhelmed with such a mass of artificial troubles that their few moments of genuine repose do not exceed those vouchsafed to their antipodes. You would urge the sufferings of the criminal class under punishment? I balance against it the misery of the rich under the scourge of their own excesses. It is a mistake due to mere thoughtlessness, or ignorance, to imagine the labouring, or even the destitute, population as ceaselessly groaning beneath the burden of their existence. Go along the poorest street in the East End of London, and you will hear as much laughter, witness as much gaiety, as in any thoroughfare of the West. Laughter and gaiety of a miserable kind? I speak of it as relative to the habits and capabilities of the people. A being of superior intelligence regarding humanity with an eye of perfect understanding would discover that life was enjoyed every bit as much in the slum as in the palace. [*Demos*]

Admittedly, George Gissing has only been able to give a slight reflection of this vitality. He did not describe it in colourful scenes, but in grey, a drab grey. Only his Henry Ryecroft discovers the rosy tones just when his time on earth is reaching its end, and so in practice his theory seems to contradict itself. In spite of his kinship with Dickens, human nature denied Gissing's strict internal judge his predecessor's most precious gift: humour.

It is true that Gissing, a little plagued by the paleness of his thoughts, described the life of the people in all its fullness, yet not with Dickens's enthusiastic imagination, but with Zola's schematism. Here he developed a system which supposedly had the charm of novelty. Via the mouth of a writer, who, like all his favourite characters, has some of his features, he announces:

> What I really aim at is an absolute realism in the sphere of the ignobly decent. The field, as I understand it is a new one; I don't know any writer who has treated ordinary vulgar life with fidelity and seriousness. Zola writes deliberate tragedies; his vilest figures become heroic from the place they fill in a strongly imagined drama. I want to deal with the essentially unheroic, with the day-to-day life of that vast majority of people who are at the mercy of paltry circumstance. Dickens understood the possibility of such work, but his tendency to melodrama on the one hand, and his humour on the other, prevented him from thinking of it. [*New Grub Street*]

The result of this more scientific than literary method of representation would be – indescribable boredom: for, in Gissing's own view, that would be the reaction drawn from the lives of the "ignobly decent." Happily, there was too much of the poet in him to succumb helplessly to the curse of this method.

If his choice of subject was the same as Dickens, Zola was definitely his model as a novice. He strived for totality, without ever attaining the immense monumentality of his master. He lacked the Cyclopean fist which piles up things or crushes them at will; he had a meticulously exact hand which betrayed itself in the careful polishing of his style, and in this he, at the very least, surpassed the Frenchman. Gissing transplanted Zola's environmental doctrine root and branch to England, and in the fullness of detail is hardly left behind him. His breadth is not linked to the somewhat evil tradition of the British novel, which has always liked to disport itself in a maze of idle fables and dense digressions, but clearly shows Zola's influence in that every detail fulfils its purpose in the overall structure. Moreover, Gissing was careful not to exaggerate the theory at the expense of the tightness of composition.

His striving for truth also expressed itself in his attempt to reduce the romantic aspect, the Alpha and Omega of literature, to the right proportion; no doubt out of disdain for the ten-a-penny English love story, which only concerns itself with the relationship between the sexes. In Gissing's view the public taste for this theme can be explained by the fact there was so little love in the real world; for the same reason the poor often demanded stories about the rich.

"Love is the most insignificant thing in most women's lives. It occupies a few months, possibly a year or two, and even then I doubt if it is often the first consideration [*New Grub Street*]." How does Gissing respond to this cardinal question? "As a rule, marriage is the result of a mild preference, encouraged by circumstances, and deliberately heightened into strong sexual feeling. You, of all men, know well enough that the same kind of feeling could be produced for almost any woman who wasn't repulsive [*New Grub Street*]." In Gissing's books there is talk of many other things which clearly did not recommend themselves to the regular subscribers of the lending libraries.

I will briefly mention his two most valuable novels. Just two years after his first work, *Demos* appeared, subtitled *A Story of English Socialism* and prefaced by a motto from Goethe: "Those men there are starting a party; what a ridiculous notion! But our party indeed! That is a different thing!" (At any rate the admirable man is not to be forgotten for his frequent show of veneration towards Goethe, and especially for his German culture.) As a fictional fresco painting of a political movement *Demos* has lost much of its resonance. However skilfully Gissing succeeded in describing a proletarian family, however felicitously he spread light and shadow among the opposition, and however artistically he differentiated the agents of socialism from one another – here the radicals, there the aesthetes, who served William Morris as a foil: the actual realisation of the Socialistic idea, which forms the core of the story, appears romantic. Still, no less romantic than Walter Besant's utopia, later to be memorialised in stone. In fact, the focus is on other things: a fight for inheritance and the ancient epic motive of the curse of gold. In his depiction of the Mutimers, a hard-working, uneducated, but, of their kind, fairly happy family, Gissing showed how the demon money upends all the conditions of life and spoils one's character. The sister loses herself in mindless pleasure; the brother becomes a good-for-nothing, the other commits a breach of faith. Only the mother, refusing to have anything to do with the new-found wealth, raises a warning voice, and is right in the end. This leads in a wide arc to Ryecroft, who extols the cultural benefit of modest assets and considers moderate wealth the basis for a dignified existence.

Everything Gissing created merges in Henry Ryecroft. Like a twin brother, filled with his creator's passion, Edwin Reardon speaks directly to us in that glorious novel *New Grub Street* (1891). (Grub Street was in Pope's time the centre of literary affairs.) Here Gissing has written a journalistic *Vanity Fair*. In Reardon he gave us his David Copperfield, and in Jasper Milvain a male Becky Sharp. The portrait of this unprincipled, largely shallow, but at bottom harmlessly fickle hack is perhaps the one worthy of the most praise among those of the various writers. And as a figure of contrast almost as accomplished, the decent, struggling man of letters, Reardon, who, taking life and art seriously,

yearns for the sun and seeks the land of the Greeks with all his soul: a Ryecroft of past years. In addition to the two main protagonists, there are memorable scenes out of the *piccolo mondo moderno* of authorship. Here Gissing depicts the torment of a proud martyr to his calling, pulled down by adverse fate, and writing himself into the ground. But, fortunately, Gissing does not conclude his life's work with such discord. His illness must have carried him beyond the harsh side, opened his eyes to the more pleasant aspects of this earthly vale of tears. Thus, as he slowly prepared for the end, he still gazed at the rays of the waning sun, saw the world suffused in purple light. He faced death with stoic serenity, in Spinoza's sense, as a free man. And as the shadows of the night floated about him, he found a softer melody with tones full of sweet tranquillity. Out of the semi-darkness Ryecroft's transfigured features emerge …

[In February 1904 Meyerfeld reworked his 9 January obituary into a shorter version, omitting mention of Gissing's private life.]

"Neue englische Bücher," *Literarisches Echo*, (1 February 1904), pp. 614-616.

The ways of the British book critic are surely mysterious. Whoever does not dance to his tune, falls into disrepute. Whoever offers him plain bread instead of sweetmeats is ignored. No one has experienced this more than George Gissing, who has just died at the age of forty-six in St. Jean-de-Luz, a coastal town in southern France. He has never been popular like the suppliers of entertainments, and is scarcely known outside of literary circles. His art rose to solitary heights and never made concessions to the market. The more the masses disregarded him, the less he allowed himself to be disconcerted, and the more he stuck to his path. Two things alienated the majority of readers: his dislike of glossing over things and his commitment to his art. He was ruled by a brutal candour which the crowd read as open ruthlessness, as the desire to strike a blow at the self-satisfied rich. He did not avoid the shadowy side of life, neither did he hide from the unpleasant side without somehow showing a morbid inclination towards the pathological in human nature or tumours in the physical state of society. Temperament and temper prevented him from seeing the world through rose-tinted glasses or in colourful images, yet he saw all the more the grey tones, misery, misfortune, and injustice, which no unbiased person can deny. His own misfortune must have strengthened him in such inclinations. From the start his sympathies always belonged to the toilers and downtrodden whose suffering cried to Heaven in vain. He was attracted to the lower middle class, soon becoming the best authority on them. The literary artist in him was influenced mainly by Dickens and Zola. If he is close to Dickens in his choice of material, he lacked his precious gift for humour, and he wilfully distanced himself from him by omitting all moral doctrines. He learned his technique mostly from the great Frenchman.

Like Zola he strove for totality and vied with him in the depiction of crowd scenes. But even in this he was no imitator, for he disdained the heroic situations of his master, and the imaginary scene painting which elevates his characters above realistic monotony. Gissing never left his personality out of his work. His aura is felt in all his books. His countrymen, used to regarding literature as an edifying product, were quick to brand Gissing offhandedly as a consistent exponent of realism and an apostle of pessimism. As a result his envious and optimistic peers hindered the success of his novels. Every commonplace writer of trash could surpass him. Gissing, whose life was no bed of roses, saw himself faced by an impenetrable wall of resistance. He suffered from his reputation, being too honest to betray his convictions. Life had to convert him. This sea change was greeted with a sigh of relief in his last work: *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. It is a confessional book, a moving farewell to life. The romantic, slightly tired structure, the use of the straw man as the figure of sentiment whose private papers are issued after his death, do little to disguise the autobiographical tone of the book. A veteran scribe, suddenly gaining modest prosperity through a friend's kindness, flees the bustling city for rural seclusion, reflects on his painful past, and enjoys the happy present. The bitterness he tasted to the rim is no more; sweet peace in touch with nature nourishes him, swells his breast. Once more he allows the labyrinth of life – not a kaleidoscope to be sure, but also no desolate vale of tears – to sweep over him. In the handling of various themes, the thought of death gives the main tone. There is no self-satisfied happiness in monastic poetry, no cosy moral isolation making itself at home, but hard-secured resignation is the final outcome: "For I have been a man, and that/Means I have been a combatant" [from Goethe's *Westöstlicher Diwan*]. Thus does the old man transfigured by melancholy cry out to us. A jaded man, now out of the world, speaks. His soul, in the silence of the churchyard, has time to reflect. Nothing can disturb the balance of his mind, his unshakeable stoicism; not outside events, nor unwelcome visitors, only the tragic awareness that it has come too late. How much more do the conditions of life improve one, if modest wealth comes to one's aid? Under daily pressure of material concerns, the highest good, in short, the ability to awaken dormant powers, is lost through misery. Yet Gissing's *adieu* does not mean a break with his life's creed, for what he has so far created is assimilated in Ryecroft. It is only the elevated reflection of his yearnings. The first signs are already manifest in his early socialist novel *Demos*. The theme recurs in a different key in *New Grub Street*, a journalistic *Vanity Fair*, perhaps most likely to keep Gissing's name alive. This novel will give him the place in literary history which contemporary critics have denied him out of blind veneration for fashionable idols.

[Meyerfeld's next article is a review of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*.]

"Neue englische Romane," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, *erstes Morgenblatt*, No. 43 (12 February 1904).

No one cursed the daily grind of literary work, cursed its devastating effects, more than the writer Henry Ryecroft, whose posthumous papers were published by the recently deceased George Gissing in his latest novel: *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. When I first read this life confession, this adagio smiling with tears, it occurred to me that the novelist, who is branded a confirmed pessimist, had been broken down by his life experience. Now I know why: the book was a farewell to this luminous existence. He had made peace with Heaven and mankind. He had reviewed his earthly life from a radiant height and his spirit had floated over the depressions. In the autumn of his life he looked back at distant memories and interweaved the rough fabric of reality with the gold shimmering thread of poetry. For the melody of this book I could think of no more suitable background music than the second movement of Beethoven's Sonata No. 27, Op. 90 in E minor. The restrained cry of joy from Hanns the stonebreaker [Steinklopferhanns] as he is saved at the last moment in Anzengruber occurs to me: "'s kann dir nix g'schegn, 's kann dir nix g'schegn!' ["Nothin' can appen to yer, nothin' can 'appen to yer!" *Die Kreuzelschreiber* (1872)]. Henry Ryecroft, who records his memories, is of course, if one ignores the fictional disguise, no one other than George Gissing himself. He has lived for twenty years from his writing, experiencing good and bad, but mostly bad. Through iron discipline, despite having felt much bitterness in his breast, he never allowed it to show in his external appearance; and the most bitter thought for him was to be defeated after decades of struggle. Yet the fifty-year-old, whose health and energy was beginning to falter, was saved from grim need by a merciful fate. A friend bequeathed to him in his will a yearly pension of three hundred pounds. Then he at once swapped the tenement flat in a London suburb for a cottage in his beloved Devonshire, determined never again to touch his pen, his old friend and foe. Here he lived with a peasant charwoman in self-imposed solitude. World weary, far from the world. But the wounded veteran could not quite leave writing alone. The urge was strong in him when desire came to write down his thoughts and memories: harmonious meditations from the last five years of his life; until one summer's evening he drifted from the deep silence of his modest Tusculum into a still deeper silence. The writer with the sick heart had gently passed away. That is the oft-used and somewhat worn-out framework in which Gissing has inserted the round dance of his feelings; this he has then arranged according to the four seasons as the product of a mind much influenced by the weather, and the many ensuing natural observations and reflections justify his

method. On every page one gets the immediate impression: everything is based on actual experiences. In spite of the dressing up and disguising, it is nearly always Gissing who speaks straight to us in every line. One can feel his pulse beat. Anyone who knows his earlier work, which admittedly he wrote in a different key, will rediscover many motifs in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. If ancient wisdom concerning the old, worn-out lesson about the curse of gold is drummed forth in *Demos*, here it is quite the opposite: the blessing of money shines down gently on the evening of life like a radiant rainbow. Since his nightmare concerns about earning his daily bread have left him, Ryecroft breathes a sigh of relief and attains to a fully humane state; under the benefaction of ownership which makes a generous benefactor out of the owner, he achieves the highest level of satisfaction with life. But the new master of his destiny is too much a slave to his former life, whilst his memory continues to linger on the dark past. Ryecroft, who slowly drifts into a *vita contemplativa*, still sees himself as Edwin Reardon, the writer who is a slave to daily toil at his desk in Gissing's most important novel *New Grub Street*. The pale double appears again. And yet, how gilded is the past! How infinitely milder does Henry judge distant events than his intellectual predecessor Edwin, who is crushed by the viper that is the living present. Both, nonetheless, with their thirst for knowledge, with their yearning for the Greek shore, with their predilection for the Stoics, with their misguided optimism, arouse admiration for their prototype: George Gissing.

[In 1905 Meyerfeld published a review of Gissing's posthumous *Veranilda*.]

"*Veranilda*: Englische Bücher," *Literarisches Echo*, (1 January 1905), pp. 475-476.

The unfinished historical novel *Veranilda*, which comes as a surprise, was left to posterity by George Gissing, whose reputation since his early death has risen to an unforeseen level as though the irony of fate wanted to remain true to the long-suffering writer even beyond the grave. The book is – to the dead man's glory – a mild disappointment, because it is impersonal. Certainly, it does not lack a tragic interest in that a man who had to go out to tutor unruly schoolchildren during the day still had sufficient time to give to extensive historical studies. Truly his love for the Roman classics has found an outlet in nearly all his novels and pervades Henry Ryecroft's confession as a hymn to life. The cultural historical reality, which is nowhere reproduced with archaic insistence, may appeal to the antiquarian and be a support to the young miss at home who would like to refresh her memory out of the school history lesson: but for the assessment of the work itself, it is of secondary significance, as it is quite lacking in colour. It is even blander than *Ein Kampf um Rom* [1876] which has the exact same theme and which through its verve and its heroic

stance so easily impresses the youthful mind. Like [Felix] Dahn [(1834-1912): German author of above novel] Gissing does not disdain an extensive canvas. He has devised an intrigue, out of which Sardou could easily make a spectacle. The evil element in the shape of the false friend Marcian and the lusty courtesan Heliodora are opposed by the remarkably attractive lovers, Basil and Veranilda, the gallant, aristocratic Roman of the typical breed of youthful hero and the goddess of royal descent who has the same sentimentality as a modern British girl in a comedy of manners. Undoubtedly the chapter with the most individual character is the one set in the monastery of Monte Cassino, where Basil, under the gentle influence of St. Benedict, recovers from a severe spiritual crisis. Here the mood of exhaustion echoes the theme of brave resignation in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*; here speaks George Gissing in the face of death …

[Meyerfeld's last article on Gissing was a review of *Will Warburton*.]

"George Gissings letzter Roman," *Nation*, Bd. 22 (12 August 1905), p. 733.

George Gissing, *Will Warburton* (London: Constable 1905). – As I wrote before in these pages George Gissing died on 28 December 1903 aged forty-six in St. Jean-de-Luz, a seaside town at the foot of the Pyrenees in southern France. He was a humanist – a fighter, a precious man – a battling artist. Now the second and hopefully last posthumous novel lies before us: after the historical *Veranilda* comes the realistic *Will Warburton*. Both are artistically dull, at least beside the splendid confession of Henry Ryecroft, but not without a certain humane charm, so that one recalls them even if they soon fade away after the reading.

Veranilda was Gissing's attempt, after years of constant effort in perfecting his art, to set new boundaries for his talent. Historical subjects, which could be easily adapted into a fictional narrative, were always very dear to the former tutor; and here he could utilise material from the time of the Gothic king Totila with the joy of the expert whilst eschewing an archaic style. Sadly, he either lacked the courage or the strength to clothe the ancient material in a new form and stayed firmly on the old beaten track of the military route instead of taking the story in an alternative direction. The historical yarn was a Procrustean bed in which Gissing's personality did not seem quite at home. Individual characters only had a few chapters near the end of the book in which the poet in the shadow of death, thus resigned, took leave of the glorious world, glorious in all its injustice, and yearned for sweet peace.

With *Will Warburton, A Romance of Real Life*, George Gissing returns to the realm of *New Grub Street*. The hero, though no writer of books but only a simple grocer, has much in common with Edwin Reardon. There are also recognisable similarities in the female characters. But now for the profound difference: gone (or

at least much diminished) is his hot anger towards the world, his revolt against fate which distributes talent without choice or fairness, his dull resentment towards a life ruled by chance in which most vexingly money plays the major role. People become stunted, are worn out, sleep restlessly in their beds at night and are finally smashed on the cliffs of this blissful earth because – a dreadful laugh is raised to Heaven – because they lack the necessary means. Lack, need, and poverty cause all that is worst in life; in the end even noble natures are not safe in the struggle against that Cyclopean monster chance. When they have at last outridden the crisis, there is something broken in them, their laughter sounds anxious because they are forever weighed down, as if by a nightmare, by the tragic thought – it is all too late. And yet, those who suffer in life, loving it for all they are worth, are the very ones called upon to show the so-called fortunate people all its beauty.

George Gissing suffered in life; he loved life fervently. And, towards the end as death approached, he was granted the chance to live out his life in peace. Henry Ryecroft's refined wisdom looms high like a luminous rainbow even if Alberich's derisive "too late" [from Richard Wagner's *Das Rheingold*] may also be boomed forth out of the black depths. Gissing came to terms with his life. What he had gained in times of severe mental struggle was not lost to him even in his last years of physical suffering. It was marked further by a resigned mildness; by the realisation that despite all our titanic efforts we can accomplish nothing, change nothing. "Why this pain and desire?/Peace descending/Come ah, come into my breast!" [Goethe, "The Wanderer's Nightsong 1"] – Only now and then does the distant thunder of the rebel still roll from the pen of the man who wrote *Demos* and *New Grub Street* and was unable to make himself at home in the most treacherous of all worlds. Will Warburton rebels inwardly in the same way, ruthlessly forcing out a rival grocer who has a drunken wife and a house full of children, in the inexorable struggle to exist. If he had his way he would rather give the money back over the counter to the poor people who buy from him. Thus, from time to time, the bitter thought gnaws at his simple heart that from now on his life will revolve around sums of money, which rich people spend in the whim of a moment. Formerly Gissing would have made this into a leitmotif; now it has become a brief striking effect. If one looks one can discover much that is autobiographical in this basically listless work. Will Warburton has, like all Gissing's heroes, his creator's traits: he is honest in every respect, somewhat self-willed, sensitive, with a strong family spirit and thus contempt for society and commercial business. Artistic tendencies are naturally not lacking; such tendencies are surprising here as exceptionally Warburton is not one of his usual types, but a merchant trained in the West Indies who is at first active in the sugar refinery and then as the owner of a shop buys sugar by the pound. That is why Will Warburton is able to speak so well about pictures,

observes with artistic joy the picturesque, undiscovered corners of London, and loves to go on long lonely walks vanishing into the labyrinth of the teeming crowd: "a mere erratic chaos […] amid London's multitudes [*Will Warburton*]." It is, above all, notable that Gissing ascribes to Sherwood, the businessman, a keen interest in Malory, Froissart, and Icelandic sagas. He, having begun as an intransigent, may indeed sometimes have seemed like Norbert Franks who makes pleasing images for the public because he wants to live and has starved long enough. It is of course a betrayal of art and his gifts as well as his own convictions, *mais enfin – le public le veut*. When a man is stunted or broken down, he will make compromises. Sherwood paints pictures like *The Sanctuary* which is gaped at by the crowd at the Royal Academy, or one writes a novel aimed at eager readers in the lending library such as *Will Warburton*, which, [Elisabeth von] Heyking [(1861-1925): German novelist] says, belongs to a type of English novel meant for young girls, for whom life is not as lively as it might be, so that they still need to have three good meals every day and "cosy afternoon teas with cream and scones" [from Heyking's bestselling novel *Briefe, die ihn nicht erreichten* (1903)]. Thankfully, due to these personally charming details, one forgets the pale, homespun plot. After a while one does not feel that the details get in the way, though at times they seem a little improbable in what is meant to be a realistic story. Then you are suddenly shaken when the husband of a seriously ill woman, who, on the advice of her doctors, has to recuperate in St. Jean-de-Luz, bursts out in a moving complaint: "She's here because of the doctors, but it's all humbug; there are lots of places in England would suit her just as well, and perhaps better [*Will Warburton*]." Poor George Gissing! The sigh was wrested from his own sore breast, and, consumed by longing, convinced that it would soon be all over with him, he must have thought of returning home to England to his beloved London. There are books perhaps offering little in an artistic sense and yet they draw from us real human participation nonetheless. – *Ave, anima valida!*

As it is almost certain that Eduard Bertz, based then at Potsdam, not only knew of, but had actually read the 9 January 1904 obituary in *Die Nation*, one can imagine that he would have been shocked to see in print the following sentences about Gissing's personal life just twelve days after his friend's death:

> As a young man he had got himself involved with a common female, a washerwoman, who he later married out of decency. The turbulent marriage, which forced the promising writer to take on menial work and led to his banishment from the society of his peers, had the conceivably most favourable outcome: she, the woman he had picked up off the street, returned to her natural element.

Having read this, Bertz must have hoped that the article would not be noticed in England. But he would have been aware that there were several English reviews which described the contents of the major German magazines such as *Die Nation*

and *Das Literarische Echo*. In fact, both *The Saturday Review* and *The Academy* had recently referred to articles by Elizabeth Lee and Meyerfeld. Can one assume, therefore, that Bertz wrote to Meyerfeld, resident in nearby Berlin, asking him to refrain from any further revelations about Gissing's personal life? We shall never know, but what is certain is that a month later Meyerfeld wrote a much-abbreviated version of his original obituary for *Das Literarische Echo* leaving out all mention of personal matters. Whatever the case, Bertz would have decided to remain quiet about the article in his letters to Gabrielle Fleury to avoid causing her any further torment so soon after Gissing's death.

To sum up, in spite of the muddled revelation about Gissing's first marriage and the usual biographical errors of that post-1903 era, of which one finds numerous examples in the above obituary and reviews, Meyerfeld must be recognised as the first major German critic to devote special attention to Gissing's *oeuvre* as well as the first to show sympathy and understanding for what he achieved as a writer.

IV

As soon as Max Meyerfeld ceased to take interest in Gissing around late 1905, and Bertz returned to his Whitman studies, it was once again all quiet on the German front, and Gissing's name was for several decades all but forgotten in the German-speaking world. This is true except for one brief period between 1908 and 1909, when a retired German soldier took up the Gissing banner.

After its first publication in book form in 1903, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* soon became the most popular and bestselling of Gissing's works. By 1908, just after Constable had produced the fourth impression of the first pocket edition of the book (October 1907), a copy found its way to Brix Förster in Munich. He was so impressed by the book that he translated a long extract into German and published it in *Die Grenzboten*, a national weekly journal devoted to politics, literature, and the arts. In 1909 he then translated three further lengthy passages from the book for the same journal.

Although Gissing would certainly have objected to the German translator's military past, he would nevertheless have been delighted to learn that he was related to one of his literary heroes. For Brix Förster was the grandson of Jean Paul, the author of *Titan*. Jean Paul never knew his grandson as he died eleven years before Brix was born on 10 May 1836 to Emma, his daughter, and Ernst Förster (1800-1885), an art historian and painter. In 1858 Brix joined the Prussian army: thirty years' service would see him rise from junior officer to lieutenant-colonel. But, as we do not claim to rank among the military novelists, it will suffice to say that there is a 400-page record of his campaign career at the German army archive in Munich out of which Tolstoy might have written a

worthy sequel to *War and Peace*, so full of amazing incident and thrilling derring-do was Brix's career on the battlefield. In brief, his record reveals that he took part in all the Prussian offensives incited by Otto von Bismarck's machinations, including the German-Danish War of 1862, the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871.

Following his mother's death in 1853, Brix Förster inherited joint custodianship with his father of the Jean Paul *Nachlass*. In 1875 they donated a small part of the archive to the Goethe Museum in Weimar. Upon retiring from the German army in 1888, three years after his father's death, Brix sold the rest of the archive consisting of 80 crates with 40,000 manuscript pages in Jean Paul's handwriting to the Königliche Bibliothek in Berlin. That same year he wrote papers on Goethe and published a book about his grandfather entitled *Jean Paul in Weimar*. In 1889 he brought out a biography of his mother based on her letters, *Das Leben Emma Försters, der Tochter Jean Pauls, in Ihren Briefen*. In these years he travelled widely in the German colonies of Africa and became an acclaimed geographer. In 1890 he wrote the seminal *Deutsch Ostafrika*, and a year later edited a new edition of his grandfather's *Siebenkäs*, a novel about a doppelgänger (a term Jean Paul invented). Up to his death in 1918 aged 82, he wrote geographical and literary essays for various journals.

There is no knowing how Brix Förster came to Gissing, but evidently the quiet, retiring life Henry Ryecroft cultivates in the Devon hills, appealed to the old, battle-worn German soldier. The first of his translations from *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* appears under the title "Űber Schriftstellerei [On Writing]."[31] It was published in an April 1908 issue of *Die Grenzboten*. In July, August, and October 1909 Förster published three further translations in the journal, all bearing the title "Englische Eigenart [English Individuality]."[32] Even more interesting than the question of how Förster discovered Gissing, is the way in which he selected and translated passages from *Ryecroft*. Indeed, his treatment of the book is worthy of an analytical essay in its own right, for he completely rearranged the text, veering away from the chronological sequence of the four seasons in Gissing's book, by fusing different sections to suit his own purpose.

Hence, the first translation, "Űber Schriftstellerei," is taken from Spring XX (works of art), and a condensed Summer XXIII (literary success and Grub Street struggles), Autumn XXI and XXII (literary life and literary methods).[33] The second translation, "Englische Eigenart I," begins with Winter XIII (the English sense and need of comfort), followed by the second paragraph of Summer IV to its end (English Sundays), then Summer XVI (English inns and public-houses), the first two paragraphs of Winter VII (English food), the first sentence of Winter VIII (English mutton), a condensed Winter IX (vegetarianism), Summer XVII (social differences), Summer XXI (diet), and the first paragraph of Spring XIX

(conscription).[34] The third extract, "Englische Eigenart II," starts, significantly, in view of Förster's military background, from the third sentence of the second paragraph of Spring XIX (Gissing's diatribe against the drilling he was subjected to at Alderley Edge); carries on with Autumn XVII (agricultural toil), then the first paragraph of Winter XI (the deterioration of English butter), all of Summer XVIII (the sociability of Englishmen), and continues from the third sentence of the second paragraph of Summer XX to the end of that paragraph (the English monarchy and common sense).[35] Lastly, "Eigenart III" starts with Summer XX from the third paragraph to its end (English progress under Queen Victoria), the long Winter XX section (hypocrisy), all of Winter XXII (English Puritanism), continues from the second sentence of Winter XXI to its end (the national character of the English), then carries on from the third paragraph of Winter XXV to its close (the true-born son of England), and concludes with Summer XXII (the movement away from a patrician society to democracy in England).[36]

[1] Patrick Bridgwater, *Gissing and Germany* (London: Enitharmon Press, 1981).

[2] *Ibid*., p. 10.

[3] Morley Roberts, *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1912), p. 293.

[4] Hermann Hesse edited a good many of Jean Paul's works between 1913 and 1960, including an abridged two-volume edition of *Titan* (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1913).

[5] Friedrich Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke: Band 22* (Wien: comm. by Anton Doll, 1836), p. 422.

[6] Volker Spierling, *Materalien zu Schopenhauers Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (Frankfurt: Frankfurter Verlagsanstalt, 1984), p. 118.

[7] Bridgwater, p. 14.

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

[9] Arthur C. Young, *Letters of George Gissing to Eduard Bertz* (London: Constable, 1961), p. xxix.

[10] Eduard Bertz, "George Gissing: ein Real-Idealist," *Deutsche Presse*, 3, 10, 17 November 1889, pp. 357-359, 366-367, 374-375 – revised for *Das litterarische Echo*, 1:10 (June 1892).

[11] Eduard Bertz, "*The Emancipated*. A novel by George Gissing. In three volumes," *Deutsche Presse*, 4 May 1890, p. 143.

[12] George Gissing, "Phöbes Glück," transl. by Eduard Bertz, *Aus Fremden Zungen*, Heft 18 (1891), pp. 872-879.

[13] George Gissing, *Ein Mann des Tages* [*New Grub Street*], transl. by Adele Berger and serialised in *Pester Lloyd*, 29 December 1891 to 30 April 1892; George Gissing, *Demos*, transl. by Clara Steinitz (Leipzig: Ottmann, 1892), 3 vols.

[14] George Gissing, *New Grub Street* (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1891), 2 vols.

[15] In fact, a novel by his brother, Algernon. *Meyers Konversations-Lexikon* (Leipzig and Wien: Bibliographisches Institut, 1899-1900), Vol. 20, p. 304.

[16] August Schaefer, *George Gissing: Sein Leben und Seine Romane*. Diss. Marburg, 1908.

[17] Wilhelm Horn, "George Gissing über das dichterische Schaffen," *Archiv für die Studie der Neueren Sprachen*, Neue Series 37, 1918, pp. 25-33; Adolf Rotter, *Frank Swinnerton und George Gissing: eine kritische Studie* (Prague: Rudolf M. Rohrer Verlag, 1930); Anton Weber, *George Gissing und die soziale Frage* (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1932); Conrad F. Stadler, *Die Rolle der Antike bei George Gissing*. Diss. Freiburg im Breisgau, 1933; Hroswitha Sieper, *Psychologische Studien zu den Romanen George Gissings*. Diss. Basel, 1937 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1937); Gerhard Haasler, *Die Darstellung der Frau bei George Gissing*. Diss.

Greifswald: Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Universität, 1938; Paul Neugebauer, *Schopenhauer in England: mit besonderer Berücksichtigung seines Einflusses auf die englische Literatur* (Berlin: Paul Funk, 1932): Schopenhauer's influence on Gissing is analysed on pp. 41-43.

[18] George Gissing, *Demos, A Story of English Socialism* (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1886).

[19] Daniel Blackburn and Alexander Arsov, "Three 'Lost Stories' of W. Somerset Maugham," *English Literature in Transition*, 57:1 (2014), pp. 3-15.

[20] Wulfhard Stahl, "Bertziana in Victor Ottmann's *Litterarisches Echo*: The Rediscovery of a Rare File," *Gissing Journal*, 41:2 (April 2005), pp. 1-17.

[21] Marie Corelli, *The Hired Baby with Other Stories and Social Sketches* (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1891), p. 263. One wonders if Corelli had just read *New Grub Street*, when she wrote the quoted passage. At any rate she clearly shared Gissing's bitter and bleak view of literary life, even if she herself achieved phenomenal fame and fortune from her writings.

[22] Elisabeth Lee, "Englischer Brief," *Literarisches Echo*, February 1904, p. 642. My translation.

[23] Pierre Coustillas, *The Heroic Life of George Gissing*, *Part III: 1897-1903* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), p. 270.

[24] Harriet Lynch, "Literary Notes," *Academy and Literature*, Vol. 66, 16 January 1904, p. 65.

[25] George Moore, *Arbeite und Bete* [*Esther Waters*], transl. by Annie Neumann-Hofer and ed. with an introduction by Max Meyerfeld (Berlin: Egon Fleischel, 1904).

[26] All translated by Max Meyerfeld: George Moore, *Aus Toten Tagen* [*Memoirs of My Dead Life*] (Berlin: Egon Fleischel, 1907); *Liebesleute in Orelay* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1925); *Pariser Geschichten* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1926); *Albert und Hubert. Erzählung* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1928).

[27] All translated by Meyerfeld: William Shakespeare, *Othello, der Mohr von Venedig* (Berlin and Leipzig: Tempel Verlag, 1914); Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis, Aufzeichnungen und Briefe aus dem Zuchthaus in Reading* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1905); Oscar Wilde, *Die Herzogin von Padua, eine Tragödie aus dem 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Egon Fleischel, 1906); Oscar Wilde, *eine Florentinische Tragödie* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1907); Oscar Wilde, *Epistola in Carcera et Vinculis* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1925). John Galsworthy, *Der Zigarettenkasten. Komödie in drei Akten* [*The Silver Box*] (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1909); John Galsworthy, *Justiz. Drama in vier Akten* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1913); John Galsworthy, *Der Erste und der Letzte* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1925).

[28] Max Meyerfeld, *Robert Anstey, Ein Akt* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1912).

[29] Amelia von Ende, "Literary Berlin," *Bookman* (New York), 37:2 (April 1913), p. 140.

[30] All translated by Meyerfeld: Siegfried Sassoon, "Englische Lyrik seit 1914," *Literarisches Echo*, 27:4 (January 1925), pp. 201-206; Osbert Sitwell, "Literarische Koterien in London," *Literarisches Echo*, 27:4 (January 1925), pp. 212-218; Osbert Sitwell, "Epilog zum Roman *Vor dem ersten Bombenabwurf*," *Deutsche Rundschau*, 217 (October 1928), pp. 55-62.

[31] George Gissing, "George Gissing: Über Schriftstellerei [passages from *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*]," transl. by Brix Förster, *Grenzboten*, April 1908, pp. 36-42.

[32] All translated by Förster from *Ryecroft*: "George Gissing: Englische Eigenart I," *Grenzboten*, July 1909, pp. 155-162; "George Gissing: Englische Eigenart II," *Grenzboten*, pp. 253-259, August 1909; "George Gissing: Englische Eigenart III," *Grenzboten*, October 1909, pp. 463-471.

[33] George Gissing, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, ed. by John Stewart Collis (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982), pp. 59-63, 138-143, 209-216.

[34] *Ibid*., pp. 254-256, 85-87, 118-122, 240-241, 243, 245-247, 122-124, 133-135, 55-56. [35] *Ibid*., pp. 57-59, 199-203, 249, 124-128, 130-132. [36] *Ibid*., pp. 132-133, 272-276, 278-282, 277-278, 289-290, 135-138.

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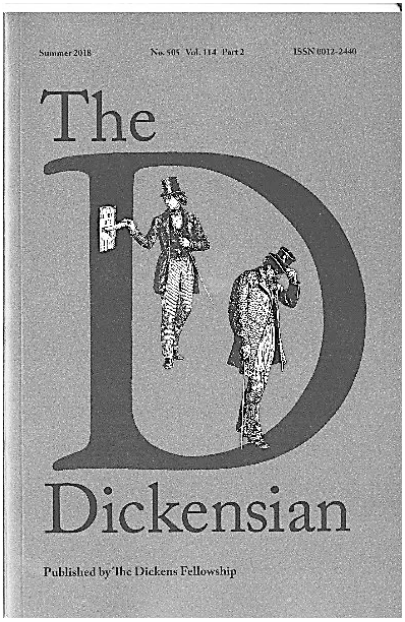

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CONTENTS

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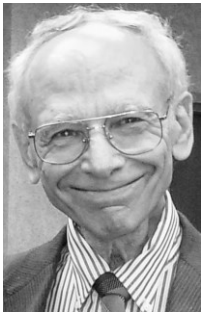
Robert Livingstone Selig 1932-2018

MARKUS NEACEY
Berlin



Robert Selig
(Maureen Patrick 2019)

We are sorry to announce the death of Professor Robert Livingstone Selig on 19 September 2018. For many decades, but especially in the 1980s and 1990s, he made a major and lasting contribution to Gissing scholarship. His discovery (and in part Pierre Coustillas's also), the result of many years research at Newberry Library on Chicago's Washington Square and at the library of the Chicago Historical Society, of numerous lost stories written for local newspapers added new chapters to our understanding of Gissing's year of exile in America in 1876-1877, and of his apprenticeship as a fiction writer.

Robert Selig was born on 24 June 1932 in New York. He studied English at the University of North Carolina, where he received his Bachelor of Arts in 1954. He gained his MA in English in 1958, and his DPhil in English at Columbia University in 1965. His first teaching experience as an instructor in English came between 1961 and 1967 at Queens College of the City University of New York in Flushing. In 1967 he took up the position of assistant professor in English at Purdue University in Hammond, Indiana, where he remained until his retirement in 2011, becoming in 1972 an associate professor, and in 1981 a full professor. During his long academic career, Professor Selig produced four books: *Elizabeth Gaskell: a Reference Guide* (1977); *George Gissing* (1983: reprinted 1995); *Time and Anthony Powell: A Critical Study* (1991); and *George Gissing, Lost Stories from America* (1992).

On 29 December 1978, along with Pierre Coustillas, Jacob Korg, John Halperin, and Coral Lansbury, he attended the first ever MLA session to be devoted to Gissing, which took place at the Hilton Hotel in New York. The subject was "George Gissing and Women" and Professor Selig gave a talk on "The Gospel of Work in *The Odd Women*: Gissing's Double Standard." At the ensuing Gissing dinner, he amused his colleagues by saying that "a Gissing dinner ought to include lentils." But there were no lentils, nor dripping either.

Selig was also a writer of short stories himself, four of which were published in various literary journals between 1960 and 1985. His story "Borowska and Golden" won praise from Isaac Bashevis Singer after publication in *Ascent* (1980) and later made the "distinguished list" in *The Best American Short Stories of 1981*.

Robert Selig's books and writings in journals (Maureen Patrick 2019)

Selig was a long-time contributor to *The Gissing Newsletter* and its successor in name *The Gissing Journal*, publishing his first essay, "Part I of *Born in Exile*: Peak (and Gissing) at College," in October 1971 and his last, "On Virginia Woolf's First Two Gissing Reviews and Parallel Chapters in *New Grub Street* and *The Voyage Out*," in July 2010. More recently, he paid tribute to the late Pierre Coustillas in the October *Supplement to The Gissing Journal*, which he sadly did not live to see. All told he wrote 29 essays and reviews for our *Journal*, including a number of collaborations with Pierre Coustillas in connection with research on Gissing's Chicago stories and local press reactions to his novels ("indeed in the early 1990s," Hélène Coustillas recalls, "Pierre was staying with Robert for a short time, and they had a grand time chasing Gissing's stories all day through the Chicago press of 1877"). Alongside the many discoveries from these Chicago investigations which he reported on in the *Journal*, he also introduced scholars in *Études Anglaises* to the remarkable figure of Samuel J. Medill, editor of *The Chicago Tribune*, and Gissing's benefactor at a desperate stage in his Chicago experience. Beyond this Selig was foremost among Gissing scholars to draw attention in numerous important essays on what Barbara Rawlinson has aptly called Gissing's "buried treasure," his neglected corpus of short stories of the 1890s and early 1900s. He also contributed one essay, "'The Valley of the Shadow of Books': Alienation in Gissing's *New Grub Street*," to J. P. Michaux's 1981 anthology *George Gissing: Critical Essays*, and another essay, "'Lou and Liz': Ironic Echoes of Popular Culture," to the 2008 Festschrift, *Spellbound, George Gissing*, presented to Professor Coustillas.

Selig's 1983 monograph on Gissing, revised in 1995, was reviewed in the *Journal* on both occasions by Pierre Coustillas. Although the two professors may have differed in their individual views of certain of Gissing's novels, on the whole Coustillas had warm praise and high respect for the quality of the critical appraisal and scholarship in the book. In 1983 in his summing up, Coustillas writes, "The biographical chapter is very good and quite up to date, the notes invariably accurate and informative, the selected bibliography fully to be trusted" and in 1996, he adds

> the strong points of the book come out even more sharply than thirteen years ago when the volume was new in Twayne's English Authors Series. Let us hope that the publishers will make it easily available in England as well as in America. It is attractively produced and should catch the eye of the prospective buyer on both sides of the Atlantic. He will find in it enough material to send him back to Gissing's novels and short stories for a fresh appraisal or to tempt him to begin with the narratives to which Professor Selig gives the highest marks.

Selig's critical study in its revised form remains to this day as fresh and relevant as it was upon publication in 1995.

That said, his crowning achievement in Gissing studies, of course, was the 1992 publication in book form of the results of his research in Chicago newspapers, *George Gissing, Lost Stories from America*. In this volume, which brings together the stories discovered since 1980, Selig further populated and enriched a sparsely mapped area of Gissing studies. Even if the attribution of several stories to Gissing in the volume is still questionable to some extent, there can be no doubt of Gissing's stamp upon the majority. Appropriately, the short stories Professor Selig found are now a part of the complete stories first published together in 2011-2012 in 3 volumes by Grayswood Press.

Robert Selig at the Roosevelt National Historical Site in Hyde Park, New York, on his 85th birthday in June 2017 (Maureen Patrick 2019)

(I wish to thank Maureen Patrick, Professor Selig's widow, for allowing me to print her photographs here, and her sister, Susan Patrick, and Dennis Barbour of Purdue University for the information about his university career. I am also grateful to Hélène Coustillas for her advice and suggestions [Ed.].)

Remembering Pierre Coustillas

COLIN AND VIVIANE LOVELACE
Anglet, France

About 2005, I read a review in the *TLS* which made reference to Gissing and a 'Pierre Coustillas' and not being a literary critic, but just a general reader completely unfamiliar with Gissing's work, I rather boldly wrote to Pierre asking what novels he would suggest for a beginner – not at that stage realising his eminence in the field. To my surprise and everlasting pleasure, Pierre replied with a long handwritten letter full of advice and information about Gissing as well as some back copies of *The Gissing Journal* and from that date I began a correspondence and friendship which continued until his death and happily continues with his wife Hélène. Here was a scholar of immense prestige taking the trouble to write a handwritten letter of advice and encouragement to a non-academic man in the street and I have never forgotten this gesture of utter devotion and humility that Pierre brought to his life's work. By chance, for family reasons, shortly after his reply we were in Lille and called to meet Pierre – Hélène baked a cake for the occasion and our friendship was sealed!

Over the years of correspondence, I feel that I came to know Pierre and Hélène as family friends – they have taken a keen interest in our children's adventures and careers which we have much appreciated, but one thing I never knew until your special edition was that we were all Arsenal fans. As Hélène wrote to me recently: "If you had mentioned your interest, he would have known what you were talking about (also he would have been amused to think that perhaps he, a Frenchman was doing his best for Gissing but another Frenchman across the Channel (Arsène Wenger) was doing his best for an English club!)."

"Doing his best for Gissing" – a marvellous description of Pierre, I feel.

***

Chit-Chat

Anon, "New novels," *John Bull*, 6 December 1884, p. 806.

Mr. Edward Bertz has, in *The French Prisoners* (Macmillan), given us a story for boys far above the average. The period of the narrative is the Franco-German war, and the scene is laid in a small German town, to which, in common with other towns in that country, the French prisoners

were conveyed from the front. Much is told us about the treatment of the wounded; but the interest of the story is centred in a young German student and one of the French prisoners, between whom a sincere friendship sprang up and continued until the latter was borne to his last resting-place, followed by the young student, who, through the agency of his departed friend, had learned that Christ is the Saviour and loving brother of every man in every nation.

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Book Review

Maria Teresa Chialant, Emanuela Ettorre, and Christine Huguet (eds), *A World within the World: George Gissing's Vision of Art and Literature*. Rome: Aracne Editrice, 2018. Pp. 200. ISBN 9788825515879. 16 Euros.

Recent decades have revealed an upsurge of academic interest in George Gissing. The focus has been mostly on multidisciplinary approaches aiming to explore his accomplishment as a complete artist. His eclecticism is mirrored in his passion for Victorian aesthetics, including art, music, literature, and classicism. Gissing's artistic sensibility is vividly present in his fictional works, which offer stimulating possibilities of research for scholars and literary critics.

A noteworthy publication in this regard is *A World within the World*, edited by Maria Teresa Chialant, Emanuela Ettorre, and Christine Huguet – a collection of essays first presented as papers at an international conference on Gissing held at the University of York in 2011. As the subtitle of the volume suggests, the topic of the event is Gissing's vision of art and literature. The collection examines how different modes of artistic representation have influenced Gissing's literary productions. In the Introduction, the editors emphasise how Gissing's whole career was based on a "self-reflexive stance" (p. 20) that led to the development of a metalanguage, whereby he was able to observe and artistically represent the world. Gissing's intellectual musings and the realism he used to depict society symbolise the "tension between a pragmatic, almost sociological urge and the expression of artistic leanings, of an inward turning" (p. 22), which characterised his corpus.

The first three essays in the collection offer critical analyses of Gissing's relationship with the visual arts. Christine Huguet addresses the relevance of Gissing's sole contribution to art criticism in order "to examine the future writer's definition of *mimesis* and emerging aesthetic credo" (p. 32).

His comparison of the two paintings by Tojetti and Rosenthal, both inspired by Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem *Idylls of the King*, is a pivotal instance of his viewpoint on the notion of artistic fidelity. In Gissing's detailed study, influenced by his subjective emotional stance, the representation of Elaine's death voyage becomes an example of the "relationship between writing and painting, utilizing the verbal to articulate the non-verbal and move towards the visible" (p. 44).

Gissing's visual world is further analysed by Paul Delany who, using the original version of *The Unclassed*, focuses on the representation of female characters to explore Victorian aesthetics. Besides examining the extent to which Victorian aesthetics influenced Gissing's romantic view of prostitution, Delany underlines the impact of both "the Victorian pseudo-science of physiognomy" (p. 49) and criminology on the notion of "the fallen woman as an innately foul and degenerate creature" (p. 60). The visual mythology of the fallen woman cult permeates Gissing's fictional world. Its imagery makes manifest the repercussions of his own turbulent relationship with Nell Harrison. Delany concludes that the aesthetic idealisation of prostitutes in *The Unclassed*, further influenced by Pre-Raphaelite representations of *femmes fatales*, contributes to making this novel "incoherent," but also "highly expressive of Victorian perplexities about gender and morality" (pp. 60-61).

Gissing's interest in Victorian paintings is explored from an interesting perspective in Richard Dennis's study of the places of art, namely, the artistic representations of locations, whether real or imaginary, which are often created by the characters themselves. The focus here is on Gissing's *Isabel Clarendon* and *Workers in the Dawn*. Different passages from both novels are taken into consideration to analyse the places where art is encountered – whether it is the public space of a window shop, the private space of the artist's studio or the imagination – and the important role that artworks play within the plot, alongside Gissing's own word-painting of London's streetscapes or natural landscapes. Dennis notes that, "[h]owever, landscape art generally has a lower profile in Gissing's novels than historical or portrait painting" (p. 70). The different forms of art featured in the novels are also representative of the idea of "art for art's sake" championed by Gissing himself.

The vivid flame of art in Gissing's novels, however, is frequently clouded by the forces of commodification that not only control society, but also annihilate the creativity of the artist. Such a pessimistic view is particularly evident in one of Gissing's darkest novels, *The Nether World*, here analysed by Emanuela Ettorre. The two aesthetically talented characters, Sidney Kirkwood and Bob Hewett are representative of the author's "conflict between materialistic necessity and idealistic yearning" (p. 81), symbolising

at the same time the cultural and moral dissolution of a corrupted society. The artistic flair of the two men is destined to succumb to commodification. The nether world becomes a decadent place that forces its inhabitants to adapt to a more abject, hopeless life, which can be considered as "an illustration of a degenerative vision of the Darwinian 'survival of the fittest,' a sort of evolutionary 'progress' gone into reverse" (p. 84). Ettorre demonstrates how Gissing, in representing the enslavement of the artist to the laws of the market, shows that in the nether world "art degenerates into nothingness (Sidney) or into counterfeiting (Bob)" (p. 92).

Pessimism is one of the most recurring elements in Gissing's literary productions. Indeed, it is the subject of Gissing's only philosophical essay, "The Hope of Pessimism" (1882), in which the author reflects on Schopenhauer's pessimism in light of the "Religion of Humanity." As Roger Milbrandt notes, however, the essay is more remarkable for its fictional features than for its abstract ideas, thereby confirming Gissing's natural inclination towards fiction writing. Milbrandt identifies a structural link between Gissing's "The Hope of Pessimism" and his novels, particularly evident in the choice of a setting within which a simple plot and fictional characters are collocated. Such elements demonstrate, in Milbrandt's view, that "Gissing's deepest literary instincts were those of a writer of fiction" (p. 108), an idea that is confirmed by Gissing's tendency to expound intellectual concepts through an "intercalation of emotionally compelling scenes" (p. 106).

Particularly interesting is Randy Jasmine's essay that considers a completely different area of discourse. Focusing on Gissing's representations of natural landscapes, Jasmine highlights the connections between the rural world and gender, especially from the perspective of "the idealization of nature as a mysterious feminine force" (p. 109). Initially considered as a place of retreat and peacefulness from the chaos and moral degeneration of the city, the countryside soon becomes a source of anxiety for Gissing's male characters because of their lack of familiarity with rural settings and the presence of an idealised notion of womanhood, often associated with nature. Through a comprehensive analysis of *New Grub Street*, *Born in Exile* and other Gissing novels, Jasmine explores how the binary opposition between the countryside and the city, typical of the Victorian era, is never fully resolved, leading the characters to disillusionment and failure.

Female characters (both fictional and real) are central in Gissing's world. Not only associated with nature, ideal femininity is also frequently related to art. Starting from this notion, Akemi Yoshida focuses on the musical talents of two female protagonists in *Thyrza* and *A Life's Morning*. Noting "Gissing's belief in the moral and civilizing power of aesthetic beauty" (p. 127), and

exploring the sources of literary inspiration for these novels, Yoshida demonstrates how Gissing represents two different sides of the life of genius by confronting Thryza Trent's "female version of the damned artist, caught between her unconventional self and the constrictions of society" (p. 139) with Beatrice Redwing's talent, defined as a civilising power that can improve society.

Gissing's appreciation of the artistic talents of women is also proved by his great admiration for Charlotte Brontë. Retracing his interest in both Brontë's life and art through his letters, Constance Harsh compares the two writers in order to show "Charlotte Brontë's significance as a literary model for Gissing" (p. 144). Analysing passages from the novels of both authors, Harsh demonstrates their artistic similarities and temperamental affinities, as well as their structural and ideological differences. In her view, the strong fellow-feeling that Gissing had for Brontë is validated by their novels, as both writers "enact the unresolvable plight of human beings without seeking to fit them into an inevitably reductive master scheme" (p. 158).

Gissing's connections with other contemporary writers are further analysed by Rebecca Hutcheon in her study of Tennyson's influence on Gissing's narratives. After defining the nineteenth century as "the initial age of intertextuality" (p. 159), Hutcheon identifies the various Tennysonian themes and characters present in Gissing's novels, from his espousal of "the picturesque language of Tennyson's verse" (p. 160) to the creation of alienated, artistic characters, internally divided by the clash between the world and the self. The comparison of different sections from both Tennyson's poems and Gissing's novels allows Hutcheon to offer a convincing study of two important writers of the nineteenth century.

In addition to his many novels, Gissing has also been praised for his significant contribution to literary criticism. This aspect is examined by Maria Teresa Chialant, who offers an in-depth reading of Gissing's monograph on Charles Dickens. Her aim is to explore Gissing's ideas on fiction in the transition from Realism to Naturalism, and to show that he creates "a dialogue with his predecessor at two distinct but intertwined levels: at a public level with the writer, at a personal one with the man" (p. 179). Chialant's extensive analysis of this monograph demonstrates that, despite his great admiration and respect for Dickens, Gissing criticised some of his mentor's literary choices, especially the "exploitation of pathetic scenes in the theatrical sense of the word" which Dickens often used "to gratify the crude ideals of the popular audience" (p. 189).

Despite the many extant studies, there is still much left to unearth about Gissing's life and literary productions. *A World within the World* makes a

valuable contribution collocated within a stimulating international field of research. By examining Gissing's stance from an original artistic perspective, this collection of essays offers new suggestions and ideas on a variety of multidisciplinary approaches to a major late-Victorian author.

ALESSANDRA DI PIETRO,
D'Annunzio University of Chieti-Pescara

***

Notes and News

Kira Braham of Vanderbilt University at Nashville, TN, who teaches Victorian literature there and specialises in work and the working classes and labour theory, recently read a paper entitled "A 'Man Without a Calling': George Gissing and the Victorian 'Gig Economy.'" Concerning her lecture, she writes, "I gave this paper at the annual North American Victorian Studies Association Conference in St. Petersburg, FL in October. The paper reads the character Edwin Reardon in *New Grub Street* as a casual laborer and sees the novel as commenting on what the historian Gareth Stedman Jones has called the 'casual labour problem' in London in the latter half of the nineteenth century. I argue that *New Grub Street* analyzes a particular form of self-exploitation encouraged by casual labor that both demands overwork and perpetuates poverty for the worker. I suggest that this analysis is highly relevant in the twenty-first century, when rich nations are seeing a proliferation of irregular, short-term, and task-based employment often called the 'gig economy.'"

Despite the best efforts of Pierre Coustillas and Francesco Badolato to make the true origin of the word "paparazzi" widely known (see the *Journal* for October 1997 and January 1998), some journalists and writers continue to err in explaining its derivation. James Campbell of the *Times Literary Supplement* had recently (7 September 2018) to correct Claire Cock-Starkey whose book, *The Real McCoy and 149 Other Eponyms*, he otherwise favourably noticed. He writes, "Ms Cock-Starkey would have us believe that 'paparazzi' has its origin in Fellini's film *La Dolce Vita*, which features a character called Paparazzo. 'Fellini took the name from the Sicilian word papataceo for a large mosquito.' Oh no he didn't. As every reader of George Gissing knows, the name first occurs in that writer's delightful travel book *By the Ionian Sea* (1901). Fellini's co-writer on the film said that that was where they found it."

If Ms Cock-Starkey still wants convincing, we suggest she read *The Via Veneto Papers* (Marlboro, Vermont: Marlboro Press, 1992), in which the scriptwriter and novelist, Ennio Flaiano (1910-1972), explains how he

discovered the name in Gissing's travelogue in Margherita Guidacci's 1957 translation of the book, *Sulla riva dello Jonio*. Alternatively, she could visit the Gallerie d'Italia – Palazzo Leoni Montanari, the location of Intesa Sanpaolo's museum in Vicenza, where currently until 3 February 2019, there is a photo exhibition entitled "Paparazzi. Photographers and Stars from the Dolce Vita Times to the Present Day." According to newspaper reports "this fascinating photo exhibition in Vicenza, Italy, shows over one hundred images, arranged in six thematic sections, to present a sort of depiction of a very important phenomenon in the history of photography as well as offer the opportunity to analyze contemporary society by recounting moments of Italy's history and past society trends." Opening times are Tuesday to Sunday from 10.00 to 18.00 and entry costs £5 (concessions £3).

Rebecca Hutcheon and Simon J. James have recently contributed entries to the online edition of *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Urban Literary Studies*, edited by Jeremy Tambling (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). Hutcheon has written on "George Gissing's *The Nether World* and Clerkenwell" and "George Gissing's *Thyrza* and Lambeth" adding a biographical note, whereas James has written on "H. G. Well's London." Rebecca will soon supply further entries on Camberwell and walking the city. As part of her post-doctoral work, she is also currently working on a project at Lancaster University entitled "Chronotopic Cartographies" in which *The Nether World* will feature. To quote Rebecca "We will be generating various visualisations of time-space in the novel (along with 30 or so other texts)."

After the Gissing Centre was named in *The Independent* four years ago (26 September 2014) as one of the least visited museums in England, it is good to see that it has been lately recommended on https://www.tripadvisor.com as one of the "5 Best Museums in Wakefield." A reviewer from Virginia calling himself "Professor Charles" writes: "George Gissing's popularity once rivaled that of Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope, and Elizabeth Gaskell. While you won't find his books in every bookstore these days, he's still very much worth reading. His Wakefield home is manned by knowledgeable and enthusiastic volunteers; once you've visited, you'll never see the streets of Wakefield the same way. Outside Thompson's Yard, you'll find a blue plaque to mark where his father had a chemist's shop in the bustling city, but the yard itself is remarkably unchanged. Although only open limited hours, it's worth visiting or contacting in advance to arrange a visit by appointment."

Announcement: CFP Pierre Coustillas and George Gissing

In celebration of the life and works of the eminent scholar Pierre Coustillas (1930-2018), we invite contributions for proposed panel(s) on Coustillas, George Gissing, and their writing to the Annual Literary London Society Conference. This meeting will be held on 11-12 July 2019 at the Institute of English Studies in the University of London. Coustillas has had a profound influence on Gissing and nineteenth-century studies. From 1969 to April 2013, he edited *The Gissing Newsletter* and subsequently *The Gissing Journal*, the organ for Gissing studies. In 1997, Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Coustillas completed their landmark project: *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*. This edition reveals the numerous literary and cultural networks in which Gissing was involved and it has earned the Modern Language Association's Morton N. Cohen Award for a Distinguished Edition of Letters. Authoritative works such as *George Gissing: A Definitive Bibliography* (2005) and *The Heroic Life of George Gissing* (2011-2012) demonstrate the value of single-author studies and they deepen scholarship on intellectual, transnational history. For the panel(s), we invite papers on any work by Coustillas and Gissing but they must speak to the conference's focus: "'Neighbours of Ours': Cities, Communities, Networks." Papers might address:

- Coteries
- Marriages
- Domesticity
- Debtors and creditors
- Literary communities
- Gentrification
- Urbanity
- Rural
- Transport
- Digital spaces
- Flâneurs
- Empire
- Pen pals
- Parties
- Recluses
- Tradition and revolution
- Bohemians

Please submit your queries and abstract of up to 250 words and a brief biography of no more than 50 words to Dr Tom Ue (Assistant Professor, Dalhousie University, and Honorary Research Associate, University College London) at ue_tom@hotmail.com by 25 January. Notice will be given by 26 January and the panel will be submitted for consideration on 1 February in accordance with the CFP (see http://www.literarylondon.org/annual-conference).

Recent Publications

Volumes

Samuel Vogt Gapp, *George Gissing, Classicist*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. 125 Year Anniversary Collection. Pp. 220. ISBN 9781512811674. £70.50.

Articles, reviews, etc.

J. C., "Lonesome Traveller," *Times Literary Supplement*, 2 November 2018, p. 40. J. C. devotes four paragraphs to the last issue of our *Journal* with special mention of Pierre Coustillas's devotion to Gissing studies and his obsession as a collector of his works which resulted in *The Definitive Bibliography*. He also refers to Bouwe Postmus's bibliography of Algernon Gissing's works, and remarks on the wide distribution of the latter's stories to regional newspapers across the United Kingdom.

Hadeel Hatif Jassam, "George Gissing's *The Nether World*: A Picture of a Sordid Slum Life," *Al Mustansiriya Journal of Arts* (Iraq), 48 (August 2018), pp. 1-21.

Jörg Magenau, "Am Horizont des Bewusstseins," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 27 November 2018, p. 16. Review of the German translation of Gerald Murnane's novel, *Border Districts* (mentioned in the October issue of our *Journal*) entitled *Grenzbezirke.* Magenau refers to the narrator's fascinated interest in the photograph of the female Gissing biographer. Magenau somewhat ignorantly categorises Gissing along with John Clare and Richard Jefferies, whose biographies the narrator has also read, as "Autoren mithin, die selber eher an den Randbezirken des Vergessens angesiedelt sind [authors, therefore, who are themselves almost completely forgotten]."

David Miller, "George Gissing: Fleet-Footed Hester," in *That glimpse of truth: 100 of the finest short stories ever written* (London: Head of Zeus, 2017), pages unknown.

John Spiers, "Obituary: Pierre Coustillas," *Times* (London), 1 October 2018, p. 54.

D. J. Taylor, "Smothered under Journalism," *Author*, Winter 2018, p. 143. Taylor writes about the plight of the novelist forced to do journalistic hack-work to support himself and the rare example of the happy and successful journalist as exemplified by Jasper Milvain in *New Grub Street*.

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Information for Contributors

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

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