Volume LIV, Number 1
January 2020

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ISSN 0962-0443

The Gissing Journal

Volume LIV, Number 1, January 2020
"More than most men am I dependent on sympathy to bring out the best that is in me."
Commonplace Book

Grubbing A Living

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London

The comedy series *Ed Reardon's Week* has been running on BBC Radio 4 since 2005. I co-write the scripts with Andrew Nickolds and I also play the part of Ed. We named our main character after Edwin Reardon, the unfortunate hero of Gissing's *New Grub Street*, but listeners miss nothing if they are unaware of the connection. Indeed, when we wrote the proposal for the show, we chose not to mention the novel, partly because we felt that Gissing's somewhat gloomy reputation might frighten off the BBC Comedy Department, but also because we knew that the character would have to succeed on its own merits. Nevertheless Gissing was a help to us since his realist masterpiece had proved that readers could be made to care about an aggrieved, self-destructive, failed writer.

Failure always seems to be more dramatically interesting than success but the lesson from Gissing is that characters who fail require depth, they must be accurately though not necessarily sympathetically drawn if they are to engage the audience. Both Reardons are impoverished auto-didacts, soured by experience but there is much more to them than that, and they differ in several respects. Most importantly, modern Ed is a survivor which Edwin clearly is not, since he dies towards the end of *New Grub Street*. Edwin is in his thirties whereas Ed came into existence at the age of 52. Our Reardon has little or no self-pity but Gissing's rather wallows in it. Modern Ed is undaunted by his work, he can hammer out a soap script or a cricketer's autobiography in quick time, while nineteenth-century Edwin agonises over his creations. When Edwin feels overwhelmed by the job of composition, he is likely to give up and retreat to the British Museum Reading Room, there to commune with the ancient Greeks, but when Ed feels the need to raise his spirits he drinks some more merlot and puts four quid on a horse. Both writers have failed to build on their early promise: Ed has become a hack, his talent dulled by years spent ghosting celebrity books of

the kind that settle briefly on the shelves of Waterstone's *en route* to the pulping machines; Gissing's Reardon despises hack work and prides himself on being out of touch with popular culture. Paradoxically, Edwin genuinely admires the more commercial approach of his columnist friend Jasper Milvain and wishes he could work with such facility; for the same reason he would probably have admired Ed's ability to pick up scraps of paid work.

Ed has more in common with George Gissing who lived alone for much of his life in grim conditions, often eating scavanged food, which he sometimes shared with an elderly cat, and making a meagre living from 5000-words-a-day drudgery. But unlike Ed, Gissing had an international reputation and never sank to whatever the Victorian equivalent was of ghosting *John Kettley's Big Book of Weather* or *Jane Seymour's Household Hints*.

Just as Gissing plundered his own life for material, Andrew Nickolds and I have drawn from the experiences of a battle-scarred horde of fellow professionals, and from our own humiliations. Once the first series aired, we began to receive hard-luck stories from other freelance writers: one had to hand over his cigarettes to a knife-wielding poet on a writers' retreat, another was bending down to tie his shoelaces by the front door when he was hit on the head by his own rejected manuscript as it came through the letterbox, and we borrowed the story of a columnist who would post letters to himself in the country so that he could hitch a lift back into town in the postman's van. These and many more real-life experiences would become part of Ed's fictional biography. Very little in the show is made up; it may be elaborated for comic effect but there is usually a basis of truth.

It was Andrew who introduced me to *New Grub Street* about thirty-five years ago but it took us a long time to get around to re-imagining the main character. For ten years we had written a satirical column in *The Guardian*, viewing the week's events through the eyes of a sleazy professional cricketer called Dave Podmore (already a Radio 4 regular), and in 2003 the newspaper invited us to come up with a similarly hopeless writer. Over lunch we suggested the name Ed Reardon which they seemed to like. We went back to the office, knocked out 750 words and emailed them to our editor. We never heard back. It's not an unusual response. In fact, silence is probably the most common reaction to work submitted by freelance writers. I think it's because the gate-keepers are reluctant to say anything that might appear foolish or cruel so they take the easier, less risky route of saying nothing at all; often they pretend not to have received the piece of work that was sent to them. Accustomed to this, Andrew and I busied ourselves with other projects, until a young producer at a BBC party sidled up and asked, "Have you got anything?" Our bottom drawer creaked open and within a year we were commissioned and on the air.

A handful of reviewers and listeners were quick to spot the appropriation of *New Grub Street*'s hero and also his best friend Jasper Milvain. 'Jaz' Milvain is an arrogant, incompetent, and highly successful British film director responsible for such horrors as *Babes in the Pool*, *Herbie Goes to Washington*, *Sister Mom* (adapted from Ed's novel, *Who Would Fardels Bear?*). Jaz also directs – or "helms," as he prefers to say – a popular talking-dolphin franchise. The original Jasper is a thrusting columnist who eventually marries Edwin's widow; Jaz and Ed are sometimes love rivals, too. The fractious friendship enables us to explore opposite ends of the professional pecking order, and the random chance that places creative artists at one extreme or the other. The friendship between Edwin and Jasper fulfilled a similar function in *New Grub Street*, and the sections set in the world of literary magazines and popular journalism show Gissing at his funniest.

There is so much in *New Grub Street* that chimes with 2019's Grub Street: the race to the bottom of the market, the desire to appease short attention spans and to hitch a ride on existing successes, the rise of lucrative mentoring services and so on. The enterprising hack Whelpdale announces his intention to edit a weekly magazine called "Chit-Chat," which will include pieces no more than two inches long on the page: "What the Queen eats," "How are Gladstone's collars made?" Whelpdale could be an online content editor demanding yet more sidebar listicles.

Soon after *Ed Reardon's Week* had established itself I was asked to go on a Radio 4 book programme to discuss *New Grub Street*. Slightly anxious about appearing in expert company, I did some preparatory reading about Gissing and, in the process, realised how much of his own life he used as material. I could barely get a word in during the programme but I was grateful for where the reading led me.

I was delighted to discover that the fourth-floor flat occupied by Edwin and his wife Amy was actually Gissing's own home at 7K Cornwall Mansions, just north of the Marylebone Road, between Madame Tussauds and Baker Street Station. The layout of the Reardons' flat and even its outlook were identical to Gissing's. Was he satirising himself or did he simply not have time to think up an alternative setting? It's as if Gissing was Reardon, or perhaps Reardon was Gissing on a very bad day. When I was asked to adapt *New Grub Street* as a two-part Radio 4 drama I book-ended the story with Gissing's own struggles of composition. I showed him labouring over a series of false starts and doing so at the same table by the window where Edwin Reardon agonised over his own plots.

The more I researched Gissing's life – an easy enough displacement activity since it is so well documented, thanks to the lifelong labour of Pierre

Coustillas – the more I became interested in the working conditions of writers in Gissing's time compared with our own.

New Grub Street is set in the early stages of a culture war similar to the one that exercises the minds of commentators and broadcasters in Britain today. Free schooling, which followed the 1870 Education Act, had helped create a newly-literate working class with an appetite for popular fiction and journalism. Some publishers seized the opportunity to satisfy the new demand, and many enriched themselves in the process, while others deplored the dumbing down of the industry. A gulf opened up between 'literature' and the mass market; writers were advised to commit themselves to one category or the other but not to attempt to serve both. Authors such as Gissing and his hero Reardon who went their own ways, wilfully criss-crossing the genre divide, earned the disapproval of publishers, editors, and critics alike. Ever since that time it seems that critics have not ceased to rebuke artists of all kinds for 'trying to do two things at once,' as though using a broad palette is against the law of the land.

Unsurprisingly, I became curious about whether professional writers of my time are worse or better off financially than Gissing's generation. In 2018 The Authors' Licensing and Collection Society carried out its annual survey of writers' incomes. There were fifty thousand respondents described as "individuals for whom writing occupies at least half of their working life," and their average annual earnings were calculated at £10,497, a 49% drop in income since the first ALCS survey of 2006. The figure suggests that many writers are paid below the minimum wage. Can it be possible that their incomes are, in relative terms, lower than that of the hero of *New Grub Street*?

Gissing received £150 from Smith Elder for all rights to *New Grub Street*. The deal has been described as mean if not crooked: a straight buy-out, no royalties, take it or leave it. From reading Gissing's *Diary*, the first thing that struck me about this arrangement was how quickly the publisher paid up. For a publisher or production company to send out a cheque within a few weeks of receiving an unsolicited script or manuscript is unknown in my experience; it would be unusual now for a contracted writer to be paid that soon after delivery, and a BBC commission can often involve an exasperating six-month struggle to recover fees. Secondly, £150 would have covered Gissing's rent at Cornwall Mansions for three years; he could have built himself a house with the money. It could be argued that Gissing, the archetypal ill-used author, was well-paid by today's standards.

Edwin Reardon receives seventy-five pounds for *Margaret Home*, and Gissing's more prolific but not so popular brother Algernon made rather less from his books; the going rate for a first-time novelist at the time was forty or fifty pounds; modest sums, and yet they compare quite favourably with the

expectations of those who responded to the 2018 ALCS survey, especially first-time novelists who often receive nothing at all and have to pay to self-publish. Gissing's contemporaries complained about their treatment, just as writers do now without raising an inky finger to improve their conditions, but the truth is that they were somewhat better off than their descendants.

There were large disparities in earnings across the literary landscape of 1891, as there are now, and it will probably always be the case that most writers are either shamefully undervalued or absurdly over-rewarded, while the territory in between is sparsely populated. There was though a brief period of fair pay for writers and other freelance workers in the second half of the twentieth century, but that increasingly looks like a historical curiosity: it was either an aberration or utopia, depending on your point of view, but it's over now and we appear to be back where we were when Britannia ruled the waves.

In Gissing's time the masters of the publishing universe were the circulating libraries; nearly everyone took out a subscription of one or two guineas, depending on how many books they wished to borrow at the same time. Fewer people bought new editions of fiction; they were expensive, the price of a three-volume novel was fixed at £1 11s 6d, and only a fool or a specialist collector would pay that kind of money for popular fiction. It would be like handing over five hundred pounds for a Doctor Who colouring-in book. The three-volume novel was a multiple win for the libraries since it was the publishers who had to pay for the printing and advertising; as for the extra writing involved, London's garrets were crammed with obliging authors.

Most of Gissing's contemporaries worked within the boundaries of taste set by the circulating libraries; sex and religion were the main areas of censorship. It's true that writers were free to work outside the library system if they wished but that was a niche activity rather like making short films and podcasts today, and impossible without another income source or rich parents. Gissing has Jasper Milvain condemn the three-volume novel format as a "procrustian system" – referring to the mythical bandit who murdered travellers by chopping or stretching their limbs to fit his guest bed. Jasper goes on to call it "a triple-headed monster sucking the blood of English authors."

In 1894 there occurred a cataclysm akin to the abolition of the net book agreement in the 1990s or the advent of online publishing. The two principal circulating libraries Smith's and Mudie's jointly announced that they were reducing payments to publishers for triple-decker novels. It represented a twenty-percent drop in publishers' incomes and it proved terminal. After dominating the market for three-quarters of a century the triple-headed monster was slain. Tastes had changed, and the three-decker had been an object of derision among the literati for some years. Oscar Wilde's *aperçu* of

1890 typified the educated view: "Anyone can write a three-volume novel. It merely requires a complete ignorance of both life and literature."

Gissing wrote no more novels in three-volume form after 1892 and he was glad of the opportunity to cut sixty thousand words out of *New Grub Street* for the French edition. He felt it was an improvement and I agree. One wonders how much snappier nineteenth-century novels might have been without the three-volume system. Open a triple-decker at random and you can find unnecessary greetings or non-essential half-lines of dialogue occupying space on the page that would otherwise have had to be densely filled with prose. It strikes me that the Victorians' reputation for verbosity must be due in part to the three-volume format, which forced authors to use all means available to stretch out a story, however slight, to the requisite length. Radio 4's Ed Reardon is, like me, old enough to have written books on a typewriter, and in one of the episodes Ed passes on a tip that was once given to me by a seasoned ghost writer: bring in the left and right-hand margin settings very slightly and it can add a good ten pages to the overall length, swelling the typescript to the publisher's requirement. Sadly the word-count function killed off a valued literary helpmate.

We seem to have returned to the subject of desperate failure, a possibility that always hangs over the business of creative endeavour, often to comic effect. One possible reason for *Ed Reardon's Week*'s survival for thirteen series is that there is simply no limit to the number of ways in which a writing project or a literary career can go wrong. After a while it can begin to feel pre-ordained. In one of our episodes, Ed recalls the first performance of his play, *Educating Peter*, which was about the relationship between a drunken professor of literature and a promising working-class student: "As ill luck would have it, a play with a somewhat similar title had opened in Liverpool the night before. Alas, the same fate befell my next two stage works, *Stanley Valentine* and *Blood Sisters*."

Such mishaps do not only afflict failed or fictional writers. When I was researching for a radio play about Turgenev, I discovered that he had written a story which no one would publish called "Two Sisters" – a very Ed-like misfortune. On a recent trip to Sicily I visited the fifth-century B.C. Greek theatre at Syracuse – an immense 13,000 seat arena hewn out of a cliff face by an army of masons in honour of Aeschylus who planned to open a new play there. The building was eventually completed, at who knows what cost, and the city had hopes that Aeschylus would deliver another hit on the scale of *The Oresteia* or *The Persians*. The play Aeschylus came up with was called *Women of Etna*; it did not survive and the world's greatest tragedian wrote no more for Syracuse. The *Women of Etna* after-party may have been one of the most awkward in all antiquity. Even the greats have their Reardon moments.

Anthony Petyt: Our Man in Wakefield (1942-2019)

BOUWE POSTMUS
University of Amsterdam

Exactly 75 years after Gissing's death in 1903 the Wakefield Civic Society, the Wakefield Historical Society and the Gissing Trust launched a £50,000 international appeal to repair and establish as a study centre the Georgian family house at 2-4 Thompson's Yard, Westgate in Wakefield.

The house had been acquired by the local authority under a compulsory purchase order and been scheduled for demolition, but thanks to the timely intervention and research by Clifford Brook, the first secretary of the Gissing Trust, the significance of the house was brought to light and subsequently it was listed by the Department of the Environment as of historical interest.

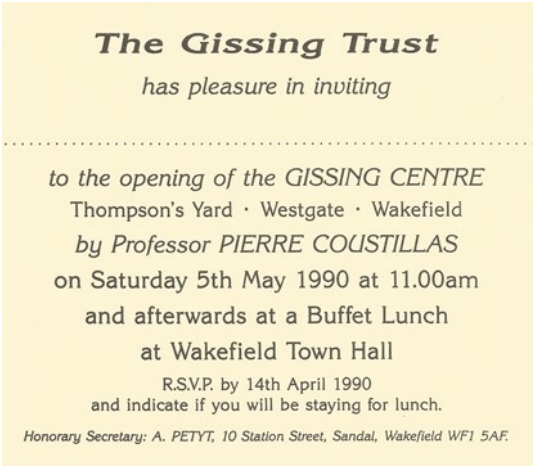
The principal aim of the Trust, formed to administer the funds raised by the appeal, was to secure the long-term future of the house. To achieve this goal, among the chief priorities were internal repairs, the acquisition of manuscripts and the preparation of rooms for a research centre, where books, memorabilia, and other objects connected with Gissing and his home town could be put on display and made available to the public.

In June 1980 the Trust first arranged an exhibition entitled "George Gissing: The Novelist at Home," and a year later in September 1981, they followed this up by a three-day symposium attended by scholars of international reputation, such as Jacob Korg, Pierre Coustillas, Patrick Parrinder, John Halperin, David Grylls, Peter Keating, and Gillian Tindall. However, it was not until 5 May 1990, after another nine years of hard work that the Trust formally opened the study centre before an international crowd of experts on Gissing's work. The opening ceremony was conducted by Pierre Coustillas (Lille), accompanied by Jacob Korg (Seattle) and Francesco Badolato (Milan). Among the crowd of well-wishers Mme. Jane Gissing Pétremand had been invited from Switzerland to attend the commemorative event, celebrating the life and work of her grandfather.

The opening of the centre was the realisation of Clifford Brook's dream: since the inception of the project he had been its key figure, in his capacity of secretary of the Gissing Trust, an office that he held for ten years, from 1978 to 1988.

On the invitation for the opening the name of the man who succeeded Clifford Brook as secretary of the Gissing Trust was first revealed to Gissingites beyond Wakefield. Anthony Petyt, Tony for most of his Gissing friends and acquaintances, became "Our Man in Wakefield." Many Gissing scholars and

students soon discovered that some of the best qualities of his predecessor were found in equal measure in Tony. He was a very keen book collector and on his shelves there were books on subjects such as the Inns of Court, the history of Wharfedale and, of course, Gissing. He was a keen, gifted photographer too, and as knowledgeable as Clifford about the Gissings as about Wakefield and its history. He was born there in 1942, and for a while he lived and worked in Harrogate, teaching agricultural subjects at a school for the blind. He later returned to Wakefield when he became an educational social worker in the city and remained there all his professional life. He was disinterested, always willing to share what he knew with those who came to him with their questions. Generous to a fault, he gladly parted with rare items in his own collection once he had decided that they were better off in the hands of people he trusted and admired. As a true Yorkshireman he was proud of his county's beauty, which was perhaps most evident during a summer visit to Heptonstall, where we had gone to visit Sylvia Plath's grave.


The Gissing Trust

has pleasure in inviting

to the opening of the GISSING CENTRE
Thompson's Yard · Westgate · Wakefield
by Professor PIERRE COUSTILLAS
on Saturday 5th May 1990 at 11.00am
and afterwards at a Buffet Lunch
at Wakefield Town Hall

R.S.V.P. by 14th April 1990
and indicate if you will be staying for lunch.

Honorary Secretary: A. PETYT, 10 Station Street, Sandal, Wakefield WF1 5AF.

We first met at the Black Swan in Wakefield in August 1994, after Pierre Coustillas had told me "you must meet Tony" if you plan a visit to Wakefield. After lunch he showed us all the various places associated with Gissing's life. We had tea with him in his home and we came away with books and articles that had eluded me until then. He was surprised to hear we had set up camp in the grounds of Nostell Priory, about 4 miles north of Wakefield and later that week he took us for a delightful walk around the Upper Lake at Nostell.

As a regular attendant at the Gissing Conferences he renewed our friendship in Amsterdam (1999), London (2003), and Lille (2008). Debbie Harrison praised Tony for his "formidable erudition" demonstrated during a tour of Gissing's Wakefield as part of the fourth Conference at York in 2011.

In 2009 what became known as "the Sinden Bequest" was donated to the Trust and the *Wakefield Express* published a photograph of the Trust's secretary proudly holding the rare sepia print of 18-year-old Gissing when he was a student at Owens College in Manchester.

His commitment to the Trust's cause never wavered and was proved by the countless Saturday afternoons he spent at the Gissing Centre, working as a member of a team that welcomed and supervised visitors.

Markus Neacey in his exemplary *The Gissing Journal: A History and Index of the First 50 Years* detailed Tony's fourteen contributions to the *Journal* between 1987 and 2010. His successful efforts to contextualise the Gissing family in the series of articles on the Gissings' Wakefield Circle proved most helpful, especially to a younger generation of foreign scholars. Particularly effective I feel was his enquiry into the Ash family, with its emphasis on Constance Ash (1865-1956), a girl Gissing fell in love with in August 1890. His infatuation with her was short-lived: it lasted about a fortnight. Tony's crowning comments on Connie Ash's remarkable life: "Poor Constance!" in their obvious allusion to the final words of Gissing's early story "Phoebe" are a reminder of Tony's factual and emotional familiarity with Gissing and his works.

At the Amsterdam Conference
(© Bouwe Postmus)

Owing to an as yet unexplained set of unfortunate circumstances the announcement of his death has regretfully gone unnoticed for too long. This is the announcement I discovered only recently; it was published in the *Wakefield Express* on 19 January 2018:

PETYT, Anthony Died 19th January peacefully in Pinderfields Hospital aged 75 years. He was the son of the late Ernest and Phyllis Petyt of Wakefield and a much-loved brother, uncle and great uncle. Family flowers only but if desired donation for the Wakefield Hospice. Funeral Monday 22nd January. Service at Wakefield Crematorium at 11.00am.

This belated attempt at an obituary is intended as a recognition of Tony's manifold and unstinted efforts as Secretary of the Gissing Trust for almost 30 years. We owe him a large debt of gratitude and we shall not easily forget his kindness and sense of humour.

I shall always treasure the copy of Gissing's *A Life's Morning*, which Clifford Brook in 1986 inscribed: "To Tony Petyt, Greetings to another Gissing fan from Clifford Brook, 3.5.86."

The Gissing-Gaussen Connection: the Levy Sisters

MARKUS NEACEY
Berlin

On 8 May 1886, in a letter to his sister Ellen, George Gissing wrote that "[t]he Gaussens have changed houses with some London people for the season. They will be in town at the end of this month." The Gaussens, an upper-class couple who lived at Broughton Hall, near Lechlade, and who had the previous year employed Gissing as a tutor for their son, James, planned to spend the summer social season in London occupying a house at 63 Gloucester Terrace, close to Lancaster Gate and Hyde Park. As his letters reveal and the memories of Brigadier-General James R. Gaussen confirm, Gissing had for a time been indulged by the boy's mother, Elizabeth Sarah Gaussen, and he, on his side, had enjoyed the friendliness she showed towards him and being introduced to her family circle. However, by mid-1886, although he was still somewhat enamoured of Mrs Gaussen, her influence on him was now on the wane. All the same, he was loathe to break off the connection and still keen to attend any social occasion to which she or one of her circle invited him.

A few weeks later he tells Ellen, in a letter dated 21 May, that "[t]his afternoon I go to the Miss Levys' – a Musical at Home. I don't know whether the Gaussens are in town yet; if so, they will be there." As there is a gap of almost a month until we have another Gissing letter and his extant *Diary* dates from 1887 onwards), there is no surviving account of this "Musical at Home." A note in volume three of *The Collected Letters* informs us that "[t]he Levy sisters were friends of the Gaussens, but not much is known about them." This note was incentive enough to make me undertake some detective work. Straight away, it was obvious that I had to concentrate on finding the sisters in London as the Gaussens, if able to, were to attend the social event "in town." I at once spent some hours searching the census on Ancestry.co.uk (which has become a less helpful search machine than it used to be). As Levy is quite a common Jewish name, it was no surprise to discover that there were a great many Levy sisters living together in London in the 1880s, sometimes five or six in one household, including Amy Levy (1861-1889), the future novelist, with her sister Kate. I had no birthdate or birthplace, London district or street name to go on, and I had no idea how old the sisters would be or how many sisters were meant. Still I could assume that they were unmarried, well off, musical, and belonged to the upper echelon of London's Jewish society. But were they still under thirty and living with their parents, or middle-aged, or

elderly spinsters? Despite knowing so little, I managed to narrow down the various groupings of female Levys until I was sure that I had found the Levy sisters Gissing visited that afternoon of the 21 May 1886. And quite unexpectedly, Gissing has something in common with one of these sisters besides her connection with Mrs Gaussen. For, like his own, this sister's name lives on to this day.

There were in fact four Levy sisters: Priscilla (1840-1916), Abigail (1846-1938), Emma (1851-1918), and Amelia (1853-1920). In this Jewish family there were also three brothers: Samuel (1837-1875), Henry (1843-1843), and Henry (1845-1912). Only two of these sisters concern us here, the two youngest. A reading of the censuses from 1841 to 1881 reveals that the siblings' paternal grandparents were Abraham Levy (1782-1844) and Elizabeth Betsy Lazarus (1786-1853); while the maternal grandparents were Abraham Yehuda Leib Lyon Moses (1775-1854) and Abigail Charva Lazarus (1775-1844). As these facts reveal, the two grandmothers, Elizabeth and Abigail, were actually sisters, and their side of the family going back to the mid-1700s originally came to London from Worms in Germany. In their wills, both Abrahams referred to themselves as gentlemen, and they were both rich businessmen in the City of London, owners of real estate, and friends of the Rothschild family. Abraham Moses' grandfather, Henry Moses (d. 1804), had started Moses, Levy & Co, a clothing company specialising in sailors' workwear, at Aldgate in the eighteenth century. The Levy sisters' grandparents, Abraham Moses and Abraham Levy took it over in partnership in 1804. By 1840 the firm had expanded, opening outlets in Manchester and Liverpool and elevens years later Moses (b. 1816) – the Levy sisters' father – inherited the firm at the death of his father-in-law. At his own death in 1882, Moses left the business and all his property to his surviving children.

Emma, the elder of the two sisters Gissing met, just about makes it into the 1851 census as a baby, at which time her maternal grandfather, Abraham Moses, as head of the family, was living with her parents, Moses Levy and Alice Esther Moses (1819-1882), and her siblings at 11 Finsbury Circus (where the new River Plate House now stands). This must have been an imposing establishment for besides the family members there were also eight servants: a footman, cook, nurse, two housemaids, nursemaid, wet nurse, and companion. One gathers from historical and parliamentary records that the Moses and Levy families did not live up to the traditional derogatory image of money-grubbing Jews. In fact, they were among the most charitable Jewish people ever to take up residence in London. Not only did they set up almshouses and orphanages, donate liberally to all kinds of charities, but they also sponsored various cultural organisations.

By the time of the 1861 census Moses Levy and family had moved to a large house at 20 Hyde Park Square, to a district of central London, where the parents and unmarried sisters would stay for the rest of their lives. Ten years later they were occupying a house a half-a-mile away at 11 Lancaster Gate. In 1882, when Moses Levy and his wife, Alice, died within a month of each other, there were only two remaining unmarried sisters in the household, Emma and Amelia, with five servants still living at the Lancaster Gate house. As the house was obviously too large for the two sisters, the following January the household contents were removed to 21 Old Bond Street and sold over two days in a massive auction. Just to get an idea of how luxurious the sisters' surroundings had been at 11 Lancaster Gate, the sale included mahogany dining-room furniture, a walnut drawing-room suite in crimson rep, handsome carved ebony, purplewood, and marqueterie cabinets, library furniture, mahogany and walnut Arabian bedsteads, brass and iron French bedsteads, capital bedding, mahogany, birch, and japanned bedroom furniture of wardrobes, chests of drawers, dressing tables, marble-top washstands, *tables de nuit*, cheval and dressing glasses, carpets, fenders, chimney glasses, Sèvres and Dresden china, valuable statuary, about 1000 oz. of plate, plated articles, wines, linen, and books.

In his will, valued at over £31000 (equivalent to £3,515,000 today), the sisters' father, Moses, had left them the house at Lancaster Gate, warehouse property in Commercial Road, and shares in bonds, stocks, and government securities in England, India, and America. Emma and Amelia decided to retain the property at 11 Lancaster Gate by letting it. For the next four years we lose all trace of the sisters: perhaps they travelled abroad. However, by 1886, they had moved into a smaller house just a few streets away at 103 Gloucester Terrace (at the turn of the century the house was renumbered 121), taking over the lease from the Frankau family, which included Julia, the future novelist and mother of another novelist, Gilbert, and grandmother of his daughter Pamela, yet another popular novelist. During this same summer, Mrs Gaussen took up residence at 63 Gloucester Terrace, just a one-minute walk down the same side of the street from the Miss Levys. Thus, on 21 May 1886, it was at No. 103 that Gissing attended the "Musical at Home," a pleasant 30-minute walk at a brisk pace from Cornwall Mansions in a westerly direction through Marylebone and Paddington. As previously stated, nothing is known about the entertainment, but we can assume that Amelia Levy performed a classical romantic tune or two on the piano.

In her youthful years she was taught by the composer and pianist, Lindsay Sloper (1826-1887), who was acquainted with Chopin in the 1840s. On 18 June 1878 she and Miss Mary Garden playing two pianos were conducted by

Sloper in a performance of Carl Reinecke's "La belle Grisélidis" at Langham Hall. Her sister, Emma, also had a strong attachment to the piano, but so far no record of any performance has come to light. Until the end of their days, they lived together at Gloucester Terrace and remained unmarried. The only notice they received in the press were occasional listings of their contributions to various charities in the *Jewish Chronicle*. Emma died on 16 May 1918 and Amelia on 20 December 1920. In her will, Emma left £7631 (equivalent to £428,000 today). She gave her share of the leasehold at 121 Gloucester Terrace to her sister, and set up a perpetual Emma Levy Scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music to be awarded every three years to the best Jewish student of pianoforte. The scholarship is still awarded to this day. In her will, Amelia left £12719 (equivalent to £563,000 today – inflation had dropped 32% between 1918 and 1920). She bequeathed donations to a number of institutions including to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution to provide a fully equipped lifeboat to be named the "Amelia Levy."

Because Gissing often complained of the difficulty of finding servants, a difficulty that families in the Victorian era referred to as "the servant problem," it seems worthwhile to look more closely at the various servants who served a very well-off Jewish family over a period of sixty years from 1851 to 1911. What is at once noticeable and surprising is the fact that only one servant appears in two consecutive censuses, Sarah Lacy, the housemaid in 1901 and 1911. She would have been only 45 in 1920, when Amelia Levy died, so we can tentatively assume that she was still part of the household until the very end. Another surprising fact is that, out of the total of 35 servants who served the Levy sisters from childhood upwards in the various households, only three came from London. Most of the servants were drawn from the southern counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Devon, Somerset, Hertfordshire, and Buckinghamshire, whereas three came from Scotland, and four from abroad: two from Germany and one each from Holland and Switzerland. In all there were 29 women servants and 6 manservants, and men were done away with altogether by 1891. Notably, the youngest servant, a footman, was 17, two others, another footman and a housemaid, were 19, twelve servants were in their twenties, sixteen in their thirties, two in their forties, and two in their fifties. Lastly, one notes the gradual decline in the number of servants, for in 1851 the parents' home had as many as eight; in 1861, there were five; in 1871, six; in 1881, five; in 1891, three; in 1901, four; and in 1911, just three again. However, one has to take into account the fact that the servants were serving seven family members in 1851, six in 1861, five in 1871, four in 1881, and two in 1891,

1901, and 1911. So there was also a decrease in household members, which would be better represented in households across Britain after the ravages of the First World War. Hence, as households became smaller, home living space became less, servants became fewer; and, in time, with the gradual advance towards domestic self-sufficiency and functional mechanisation, servants disappeared from every family household except those of lodging-houses, the rich, and the aristocracy.

1851 Census	Age
Daniel Long – Footman - Study, Norfolk	35
Caroline Scherwin – Cook (widow) – Bavaria	39
Ann Giddings – Nurse – London	45
Jane Willis – Housemaid – Somers Town, London	24
Martha Beed – Nursemaid – Warminster, Somerset	22
Ellen Clarke – Housemaid – Yarmouth, Norfolk	19
Jane Rudson – Wet Nurse – Bushey, Herts	25
H. S. Vanbren – Companion – Holland	32

1861 Census	
Emilie Classon – Teacher – Germany	33
Samuel Norris – Footman – Ilchester, Somerset	31
Anne Baker – Lady's Maid – Washing, Sussex	28
Martha Strand – Cook – Newberry, Berks	31
Martha Emline – Housemaid – Upton, Gloucestershire	27
Ann Young – Housemaid – Badminton, Glos	23

1871 Census	
Samuel Ingham – Butler – Doncaster, Yorks	43
Charles Tanner – Footman – Houghton, Hamps	19
Harriet Passey – Cook – Bronford, Herefordshire	31
Anne Russell – Lady's Maid – Chenies, Bucks	31
Margaret Adams – Housemaid – Inveraray, Scotland	34
Bertha Menden – Kitchen Maid – Hanbury, Scotland	23

1881 Census	
Elizabeth Franklin – Housemaid –Chippenham,Wilts	31
Anna Nethercott – Cook – Monkleigh, Devon	54
Jane Duncan – General servant – Brompton, Middx	23
Robert Jeffries – Butler – Newbury, Bucks	52
Edward Turnoch – Footman – Chelsea, Middx	17

1891 Census

Mary Howe – Cook – Loham, Cambs	35
Grace Rigney – Parlourmaid – Yorkshire	31
Marianne Simpson – Maid – Elgin, Scotland	26

1901 Census

Jane Loving – Cook – Agminster, Devon	38
Jenny Barbay – Lady's Maid – Switzerland	30
Sarah Lacy – Housemaid – Gt Messenden, Bucks	27
Mildred Jeffery – Parlourmaid – West Malling, Kent	23

1911 Census

Sarah Lacy – Housemaid – Gt Messenden, Bucks	36
Edith Simmons – Lady's Maid – Seaford, Sussex	30
Jessie Keeble – Cook – Easton, Suffolk	27

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Gissing and Exeter, Part Three: Man About Town

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In this final part of my exploration of Gissing's time in Exeter, 1891-1893, I begin by considering some aspects of existence that all of us have to make time for – eating, drinking, shopping, going to the doctor, and similar 'facts of everyday life.' Exeter was a small city, easily walkable, especially by as determined and inveterate a pedestrian as Gissing, but we can gauge where he walked *through* by considering where he walked *to*, not only in the city centre but also on frequent walks into the immediate surroundings.[1] We can also infer his familiarity with the city by identifying places he included in his novels, sometimes by their real names – Longbrook Street, Northernhay, Southernhay, Salutary Mount – and by observing the activities and persons he situated in those places.

Everyday life

Gissing mentions (and frequently prices) furnishings and other items that he bought for his successive homes in Prospect Park and St Leonard's Terrace, and especially items needed when Walter was born, but he never tells us where he or Edith shopped. For himself, he bought socks, two new hats, a "decent stationery-case," a cheap summer suit (50/-), a copying press and ink; for the household he ordered coal, and bought carpets, oilcloth, blind,

sheets, dinner and tea services, chest of drawers, sofa, camp-stool, and gas stove; for Walter, a cap and veil, perambulator, high-chair, and cot.[2] The only grocery items he recorded as buying were Walter's baby food ('Mincasea' – a patent food prepared from cow's milk[3] – and Allen & Hanbury's malted food), Christmas cake for the servants, stout for his mother, and "things for lunch" to entertain his former student, Walter Grahame.[4] Yet he seems to have been familiar with everyday shopping for he reported to Ellen:

> Food is splendidly cheap here, – all except butter, which of course goes off to London. The best beef-steak, 10^{d}. a lb. Mutton chops, 6^{d}. a lb. Excellent bacon 5^{d}.½ a lb. Potatoes are sold by the score (20 lb) at something less than a penny a lb. We get plenty of fish; I hope to make a dinner of it twice a week.[5]

Before he married, he twice recorded making dinner at home of eggs and bacon, and once "made dinner of chops," but as often when on his own, he dined at the Coffee Tavern.[6] There were several coffee taverns in 1890s Exeter, but the most prominent was at the entrance to the Eastgate Arcade, run by the Exeter Coffee Tavern Co. Ltd. and erected in 1880-1881, at the same time as the Arcade. By 1894 the manageress was Miss M. Cornish, and we may recall (see Part I) that Gissing records sleeping at the Coffee Tavern and at *Mrs* Cornish's on successive nights when he first arrived in Exeter in January 1891.[7] The evidence of a connection here is circumstantial but suggestive.[8] The Eastgate Coffee Tavern was not listed in Hawes' *Hand Book to Temperance Hotels*, unlike three other Exeter hotels – the "City," opposite Queen Street Station, Evered's, in Paul Street, and the "West of England" Coffee Palace, 86 Fore Street ("Good Beds. Luncheon or Hot Dinner from 9^{d} to 1/6. Tea 6^{d} to 1/-"), but it was a properly alcohol-free venture. More likely to appeal to Gissing were the prices. Dinner could be obtained for as little as 5^{d}; steak puddings and pies with two vegetables cost 6^{d}, and dinners off the joint 7^{d}. Coffee itself was 1^{d} a cup. On the second floor, next to the manager's and servants' rooms, there were three cubicles for single men, ideal for Gissing as he waited to move into his own lodgings.[9]

Gissing also dined more grandly, but only courtesy of visitors who, apart from his own close family, never stayed with him in St Leonard's Terrace. Morley Roberts visited twice in March 1891 and April 1893, on each occasion staying at the New London Hotel. On his first visit, he dined with George and Edith, presumably in their lodgings, but in 1893 he invited George to dine with him at the hotel (though he did have tea at the Gissings' the next day). In November 1891, Gissing's new publisher, A. H. Bullen, stayed at the Royal Clarence Hotel, facing the Cathedral, and entertained Gissing to dinner there. Walter Grahame also stayed at the Clarence, but dined alone after a lunch of fowl, apple tart, and Burgundy at St Leonard's

Terrace. The New London opened in 1794 as one of the city's principal coaching inns. Guests included Charles Dickens and Robert Louis Stevenson. The landlord from 1869, Robert Pople, was also City Sheriff in 1890 and mayor for three years in the mid-1890s. The hotel was demolished in 1936 and replaced by the Savoy Cinema, a typical example of Art Deco cinema style, itself demolished in 1987. The site is now a Waterstone's. The Clarence began life in 1769 as the city's Assembly Rooms, soon converted to a hotel favoured by the elite. Following a visit by the Duchess of Clarence in 1827, the hotel changed its name to the Royal Clarence. Its situation between the High Street and Cathedral Green added to its kudos, retained until 2016 when it was gutted in a spectacular fire.[10]

The only other business transactions that Gissing records are with his bank, his doctor, his dentist and the removals company that shipped his furniture and books back to Brixton. When he received a cheque for £105 from Lawrence & Bullen for *Denzil Quarrier*, he wrote to the Exeter branch of the National Provincial Bank of England, asking to open an account. It may seem extraordinary to us that Gissing had never had a bank account during his life in London, but until the mid-twentieth century only a small proportion of the population had their own chequing accounts. As recently as 1967, only 28 per cent of over-16s had a bank account. A decade later it was estimated that more than half the population was still 'unbanked.'[11] So Gissing was by no means unusual, even among the middle classes. Prior to 1891, he would send publishers' cheques to his sister or mother in Wakefield and they would send him cash through the post as and when he needed it. When he started to write cheques in order to withdraw cash, he had to ask Algernon for instructions on how to word them. The bank was located in the same block as the Royal Clarence, fronting on Cathedral Green but extending through to the High Street.

In late April 1891, Edith complained of "indigestion etc." (actually, six weeks pregnant). Gissing visited a "Doctor" (no name) who called to see her the following day. A week later, "Day lost in waiting for the doctor." By mid-May, "Edith ill with dyspepsia, or whatever it may be." There are no more references to a doctor until 5 October 1891 when "Dr. Henderson called for first time." Edith went into labour on 9 December. Henderson visited again, chatted with George, and administered chloroform to Edith. He declared his care successfully completed on 21 December, and sent a bill (which Gissing paid by cheque) for three guineas. But ten days later, Henderson was back to cope with Edith's influenza, prompting a further bill for one guinea. He returned in May 1892 (only £1 this time) and again in April 1893, resulting in a final bill for 10/6 (half a guinea), settled just before the family left Exeter for Brixton.[12]

Along with his wife, two nieces and three servants, Dr William Henderson, aged 56 in 1891, occupied a house at 18 East Southernhay, a few houses north of the Exeter Literary Society, and arguably one of the best addresses in Exeter.

Chichester Place, Southernhay East, where Gissing's doctor, William Henderson, lived (author's photograph, March 2019)

Southernhay comprised a central park bordered by four 1790s terraces on the west and a more eclectic mix of Georgian and Regency housing on the east side, most of which still survives. Henderson had been born in Scotland, but became prominent in Liberal politics in Exeter, Sheriff in 1881, Alderman in 1882, and appointed a J.P. a few years later. By the time he became the Gissings' doctor, he was "in an indifferent state of health" and died less than two months after the Gissings left Exeter.[13]

After Edith had suffered toothache for more than a week, they went searching for a dentist and settled upon "Mundall [*sic*], Bedford Circus" who charged two guineas for his services.[14] Stephen Mundell, L.D.S.R.C.S.Eng., operated from premises at 19 Bedford Circus, although by 1893 he had moved to 38 West Southernhay. *Besleys Directory* indicates that, by then, there were four dentists operating from separate premises in West Southernhay and another two in Bedford Circus. Mundell, aged 29 in 1891, was another in-migrant to Exeter, in this case from Leeds but, as with Henderson, his wife was born locally. Bedford Circus, begun in 1773 though not completed until 1832, comprised

three-storey, basement and attic, terraced houses, much like surviving crescents and circuses in Bath, ideally suited to members of the medical and legal professions carrying on their practice from home. Although many of the houses were gutted in the Exeter Blitz, not by direct hits, but by fire spreading from nearby properties, the circus could have been restored. Instead, the entire development was bulldozed and replaced by bland, low-rise shops, themselves superseded by a taller but equally undistinguished shopping precinct in 2007.[15]

Southernhay on the O.S. 1888 Town Plan, showing Barnfield House (Exeter Literary Society), prior to the building of Barnfield Hall immediately to the east; Dr Henderson's house in Chichester Place, Southernhay East; and Mr Mundell's house on the south side of Bedford Circus. Reproduced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial -ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC-BY-NC-SA) licence with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

W. J. West alluded to "the well known sisters" who ran a servants' registry office in Southernhay as a possible, if inexact, model for Mary Barfoot and Rhoda Nunn in *The Odd Women*, although they, of course, had much higher aspirations for the women they trained.[16] Certainly, Gissing records visiting several Exeter registry offices while "servant-hunting" in December 1891, from one of which he "got a good idea for the opening of a novel."[17] East Southernhay accommodated the 'Female Servants' Institution (Miss G. F. Lewin, Hon. Sec.),' but the businesses listed as Servants' Registry Offices in city directories were

nearly all in side streets close to High Street. The only one resembling West's description was in Bampfylde Street, run by the Misses Ashman.[18] The census confirms that Margaret (37), Maria (34), Blanche (33), and their widowed mother (62) together kept a registry office for servants, while living in a house on the St Thomas' side of the river (10 Fairfield Terrace). Their advertisement appeared daily in the *Devon and Exeter Gazette*, unchanged during the whole of Gissing's time in Exeter:

> BAMPFYLDE SERVANTS' REGISTRY – No FEES to LADIES or SERVANTS till ENGAGED. Any number of thoroughly respectable servants always wanted. No hotels. Stamped envelope. – Bampfylde-street, High-street, Exeter.

Evidently, George was out of the ordinary in making enquiries rather than leaving it to his 'LADY.'

A final business that Gissing bothers to name was "Monsells [*sic*]," who "agreed to do my removal for £15." This compared with the £14.15s which the Baker Street Bazaar had charged to move his belongings to Exeter in January 1891.[19] 'Mousell Bros. furniture removers & repository' were based in London Inn Square, close to the New London Hotel, so a location with which Gissing was very familiar. More importantly, although the business had originated in Exeter, it was an extensive operation with branches in London, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Paris, and Boulogne, and a head office, presumably because of its centrality, in Leamington. The company owned 350 pantechnicon vans in the 1890s. Evidently, a move from Exeter to Brixton was child's play for Mousells. The business was absorbed into Bishop's Move in 1953.[20]

Rus in urbe

A chief attraction of Exeter was its intimate relationship to the surrounding countryside, with attractive views *from* the city to the surrounding hills, and *of* the city from the outlying villages (present-day suburbs) of Pennsylvania to the north and Alphington to the west. Gissing recorded numerous walks to the surrounding villages – Ide, Alphington, Wonford, Countess Wear, Cowley Bridge, Pinhoe, Sowton, Topsham, Clyst St Mary, Clyst Honiton, Clyst St George, and Stoke Canon (all less than 5 miles from the centre of Exeter); Brampford Speke ("the most beautiful village I ever saw"[21]), Newton St Cyres, Thorverton, and Silverton (5-9 miles); and longer walks which required travelling by train one way – to or from Crediton, Dawlish, and Teignmouth.[22] Many of these walks he took with Edith. Some – those undertaken when he was living in Prospect Park – he incorporated into *Born in Exile* as Peak is first shown the delights of Stoke Canon and Pennsylvania Hill in the company of the Warricombes, and then makes his own explorations of the area.

One short walk – for Gissing and Peak – was to Heavitree, really a suburb of Exeter by the second half of the nineteenth century, but fixed in Gissing's mind as the birthplace of the Rev. Richard Hooker (1554-1600), a protestant theologian who, in the nineteenth century at least, was interpreted as arguing against the extremes of puritanism and advocating the integration of revelation, reason, and tradition, in other words, a founder of what became mainstream Anglicanism. Gissing had been reading Hooker in London only a few days before deciding to move to Exeter.[23] A statue of Hooker now occupies a prominent position in front of Exeter Cathedral but this was not erected until 1907. Peak walks

> through Heavitree (when Hooker saw the light here, how easy to believe that the Anglican Church was the noblest outcome of human progress!) and on and on, until by a lane with red banks of sandstone, thick with ferns, shadowed with noble boughs, he came to a hamlet which had always been one of his favourite resorts, so peacefully it lay amid the exquisite rural landscape. […] From the old church sounded an organ prelude, then the voice of the congregation, joining in one of the familiar hymns.
>
> […] He entered the churchyard, and found the leafy nook with a tombstone where he had often rested (*Born in Exile*, Part the Fourth, III).

Given that Peak had gone "on and on" beyond Heavitree, and that Heavitree Church, although established long before Hooker's time, was mainly a mid-nineteenth-century reconstruction, it is not clear whether the "old church" and churchyard refer to Heavitree, although Postmus associates this passage with a note in Gissing's *Scrapbook*:

> A *tomb* in Heavitree churchyard. Brickwork 2 ft high, with stone slab and high rails. Overgrown with ivy, bindweed, bramble, and Virginia creeper – the last (October) a splendid crimson.[24]

From the garden of Ryecroft's cottage, "[a]lmost within sight is the tower of Heavitree church – Heavitree, which was Hooker's birthplace." Ryecroft likes "to know of anything that has happened at Heavitree, or Brampford Speke, or Newton St. Cyres," and boasts of knowing "every road and lane, every bridle path and foot-way for miles about" (*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, Summer, III, XII). As we can see from the list of walks noted above, Gissing could lay claim to the same knowledge.

Ryecroft recalls first living in Exeter:

> till then I had cared very little about plants and flowers, but now I found myself eagerly interested in every blossom, in every growth of the wayside. As I walked I gathered a quantity of plants, promising myself to buy a book on the morrow and identify them all.
>
> […] I had a lodging in one of those outer streets of Exeter which savour more of country than of town, and every morning I set forth to make discoveries. […] Now inland, now seaward, I followed the windings of the Exe (*Ryecroft*, Spring, IX).

Gissing's country walks, too, stimulated a desire to identify trees, ferns and roadside flowers. He "[g]ot from library a book on Trees"[25] and inserted a fernery and a discussion of spleenwort into passages of *Born in Exile* set in

the Warricombes' house (*Born in Exile*, Part the Second, IV, Part the Third, IV). He also went foraging. After walking up Old Tiverton Road one Sunday morning, getting "mould for flower-pots with a few ferns," he reported to Algernon that he was "going in for a little herb-gathering."[26] Soon, he was gathering bluebells and foxgloves; in September he and Edith went blackberrying, first northwards (Old Tiverton Road and Pinhoe) and then east from their new home (to Wonford). He dug up primroses from a lane and replanted them in his garden, recording with pride when they flowered the following December. And, after refraining from celebrating Christmas 1891, he gathered holly to decorate the house for Christmas 1892.

George and Edith indulged in one other activity that merged town and country, the Exeter Horse Show, which they attended on 19 July 1892. George noted: "Rather miserable, owing to weather."[27] This was something of an understatement. *The Western Times* reported that the weather was fine until mid-day, but throughout the afternoon "there were furious sweeps of rain, accompanied by violent rushes of wind […] doing damage to some of the structures and rendering anything like comfort to the spectators impossible. [...] The storm stripped several of the stalls, and brought down a few altogether." In the morning (for the grand opening of the show), the entrance fee was 2/6, but in the afternoon, when the Gissings visited, it was reduced to 1/-. Had they waited until the following afternoon, when the weather was again fine, they would have paid only 6d each, but would have had to put up with much bigger crowds and a military tournament, hardly likely to appeal to George, in place of the jumping events scheduled for the first day. In total, 380 attendees paid 2/6 for the first morning, 1174 paid 1/- for the first afternoon (down about 400 on the previous year), while 5255 attended on the second day (up by more than 2000 on 1891). The show was held on a 9-acre site at Mount Pleasant (close to the tram terminus, north of Blackboy Road), about a mile's walk from the Gissings' home in St Leonard's Terrace.[28]

Exeter sites in fact and fiction

More dignified amusement was provided by visits to the Cathedral. Exeter was a seriously ecclesiastical city, which was of course the primary reason why the agnostic and combative Gissing chose to live there, to gather material especially for *Born in Exile*. Gissing recorded several visits to the Cathedral. In the weeks on his own when he first arrived, he wrote to both Catherine and Ellen:

> Yes, the Cathedral is very grand. I had it practically to myself for an hour the other morning, & enjoyed it all the more for the fact that the interior is heated with gigantic stoves. It will take a long time to see the building properly.[29]

> The Cathedral is very grand, & all that part of the town which lies about it is delightfully quiet & picturesque.[30]

A few weeks later he and Edith accompanied Morley Roberts to the Cathedral before seeing him off at the station. And when Margaret visited in June 1892, they climbed the Cathedral Tower. Presumably, he also took his mother there when she visited in May 1893 and they walked "about the city" together.[31]

In *Born in Exile*, Peak visits the Cathedral as soon as he arrives in Exeter, intending to stay just one night before travelling farther west on holiday. He, too, enjoys the quiet of the Cathedral Close "with its old houses, its smooth lawns, its majestic trees […] a form of beauty especially English" (Part the Second, III). He also reads the inscription beneath the fifteenth-century astronomical clock, 'Pereunt et imputantur,' but does not recognise it, as Gissing does, as a quotation from Martial, incongruous in a Christian setting.[32] There are passing references to the cathedral later in the novel, but no more architectural or antiquarian details. Indeed, there are few references to any topographical or architectural features of the city to match the descriptions of the surrounding countryside. Perhaps this is unsurprising, given that the novel was written within a few months of Gissing's arrival in Exeter.

Park Place, Longbrook Street, on the O.S. 1888 Town Plan. Reproduced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC-BY-NC-SA) licence with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

There is, however, one other street that merits description: Longbrook Street, where Peak takes lodgings. Why Gissing chose to situate Peak here, very precisely, in a real street, rather than in any other street where lodgings could be had,

or simply in a generic street of lodgings, as in 'Kingsmill,' we can only speculate. Its situation, between town and country, applied to many parts of what was still a built-up area of no more than 50,000 inhabitants. But its physical geography steeply downhill away from London Inn Square, then as steeply uphill towards Pennsylvania, meant that the views out to the surrounding hills were more obvious. Gissing's description captures this very clearly:

> In a by-way which declines from the main thoroughfare of Exeter, and bears the name of Longbrook Street, is a row of small houses placed above long strips of sloping garden. They are old and plain, with no architectural feature calling for mention, unless it be the latticed porch which gives the doors an awkward quaintness. Just beyond, the road crosses a hollow, and begins the ascent of a hill here interposed between the city and the inland-winding valley of Exe. The little terrace may be regarded as urban or rural, according to the tastes and occasions of those who dwell there. In one direction, a walk of five minutes will conduct to the middle of High Street, and in the other it takes scarcely longer to reach the open country.
>
> On the upper floor of one of these cottages, Godwin Peak had made his abode. Sitting-room and bedchamber, furnished with homely comfort, answered to his bachelor needs, and would allow of his receiving without embarrassment any visitor whom fortune might send him (*Born in Exile*, Part the Third, II).

To Buckland Warricombe, armed with the proof of Peak's duplicity, the terrace was a "row of insignificant houses" with "thin partitions" (Part the Fifth, III).

However insubstantial the houses in Park Place, the part of Longbrook Street in which Gissing housed Peak, may have seemed to Buckland, they are still extant today, unlike so much of central Exeter. In Besley's *Exeter Itinerary and General Directory* (1828), Park Place was described as "a new range of buildings," but it already accommodated two "keepers of furnished lodgings," with another three in other parts of Longbrook Street.[33] By 1891, there was one lodging-house, at 1 Park Place, where three boarders were looked after by Amelia Callahan, a 48-year-old single woman, and Eliza Bowden, 41, single, enigmatically referred to in the 'relationship to head of household' column as "partner." There were also two lodgers at no. 3, in this case deemed to constitute separate households, each occupying two rooms, with the main household comprising a railway ticket collector, his wife and baby son. The terrace was in no sense a unified row of houses. Each house was different, and they were owned individually. For example, no. 2, advertised for sale in 1884 as an "eligible investment," comprised seven rooms over three floors, plus kitchen, back-kitchen and wash-house; no. 6, auctioned in 1889, comprised seven main rooms, box-room and two attics. Each house came with a greenhouse, and was sold freehold, except for the "long strips of sloping garden" which were owned on 100-year leases from the Trustees of Hurst's Charity, formerly the Magdalen Charity.[34]

Nos. 1-3 Park Place (now 66-70 Longbrook Street) (author's photograph, March 2019)

Nos. 3-5 Park Place (now 70-74 Longbrook Street) (author's photograph, March 2019)

> From the window of his sitting-room he looked over the opposite houses to Northernhay, the hill where once stood Rougemont Castle, its wooded declivities now fashioned into a public garden (*Born in Exile*, Part the Third, II).

It is, indeed, possible to see Northernhay Gardens from Park Place – or, at least, it is possible to see the upper-floor windows of Park Place from Northernhay Gardens, which is how I and, I assume, Gissing established the accuracy of this description. As a public open space, the Gardens date from the seventeenth century, although they were reshaped in the 1860s and, by Gissing's time in Exeter, they boasted a variety of statuary and sculptures, as well as the romanticised ruins on the north flank of the castle.[35]

Another idiosyncratic terrace to catch Gissing's attention, also, in part, set back above the road, lay at the approach to Heavitree. *Denzil Quarrier* is set in the imagined town of Polterham, perhaps a cross between Exeter and Wakefield. It is not a cathedral city (and Wakefield Parish Church was not elevated to cathedral status until 1888, after the time when *Denzil Quarrier* is set), but it does have a variety of different kinds of Anglican church. It is also more industrialised than Exeter, with mill chimneys, sugar refineries, and soap works. But the only 'real' place name in Polterham was 'Salutary Mount,' and the only 'Salutary Mount' that I have been able to find in Victorian census records was a row of early nineteenth-century, middle-class houses lining the south side of the entry to Heavitree from Exeter.[36]

Nos. 1-7 Salutary Mount, Fore Street, Heavitree, on the O.S. 1888 Town Plan. Reproduced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC-BY-NC-SA) licence with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

In *Denzil Quarrier*, 'Salutary Mount' is the name of the house occupied by the all-too-respectable Mumbray family (Chapter XVI). Mr Mumbray, Mayor of Polterham and would-be "Progressive Conservative" candidate for Parliament,

Nos. 2-4 Salutary Mount (now 2-6 Fore Street), Heavitree (author's photograph, March 2019)

Nos. 10-11 Salutary Mount (now Fore Street), Heavitree (author's photograph, March 2019)

had made his money in soap-boiling. He supported the anti-radical of the town's two literary societies. He was determined to "preserve the purity of home," though his own home-life was hardly characterised by the "holiness, charity, peace" he advocated (Chapter X). 'Salutary Mount' is an appropriately ironic name for his residence. By marrying the artist, Eustace Glazzard, Mumbray's daughter, Serena, rebels against her even more censorious mother, who would prefer her to marry the ascetic Rev. Scatchard Vialls. Serena's wedding, "absolutely private," not in her parents' church but in "St Luke's, which was blessed with a mild, intellectual incumbent," is scheduled for 10 a.m. and soon after 11 a.m. she and Eustace are on the train to London en route for Sicily (Chapters XVI, XIX).

The real 'Salutary Mount' makes few appearances in the local press, but two entries during the period when Gissing was writing *Denzil Quarrier* caught my attention. At no. 6, a "freehold family residence" sold in 1883 for £990 [compare Gissing's house in St Leonard's Terrace which was valued at less than £250],[37] the Rev. J. L. Kitchin, chaplain, regularly advertised for private pupils.[38] On 30 October, his classified ad appeared immediately above an entry from Miss Vinnicombe, one of Edward Vinnicombe's daughters, who offered guitar lessons,[39] perhaps another prompt for Gissing to change 'Vinnicombe' to 'Warricombe' as he revised *Born in Exile*. Three doors away from Kitchin, at no. 9, the daughter of Robert N. G. Baker, who owned Heavitree Brewery, was married on 23 September in the kind of society wedding that Mrs Mumbray would have hoped for Serena. The bride's husband was Dr Raglan Thomas, 13 West Southernhay.[40] In *Denzil Quarrier*, Serena's brother is named Raglan.

I have already discussed Southernhay as the residence of Gissing's doctor, but it also features in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. Ryecroft describes going into Exeter "about sunset" to transact business and walking home through Southernhay, where "as I was passing a house of which the ground-floor windows stood open, there sounded the notes of a piano […] that nocturne of Chopin which I love best," played by "a skilful hand." Ryecroft's "heart leapt" and he "trembled with very ecstasy of enjoyment." He "waited in the hope of another piece, but nothing followed, and so I went my way" (Summer, XXVI). Lest we too readily equate Ryecroft and Gissing, we should note that Ryecroft goes on to celebrate all kinds of piano-playing, even "five-finger exercises," whereas Gissing had raged at the "vigorous strumming" of the Rocketts in his lodgings in Prospect Park.[41] Likewise, compare the barbed observation in Gissing's *Commonplace Book* – "The cathedral bells are ringing merrily all to-day. I ask the reason, & find that it is to celebrate the coming of the Judges"[42] – with the nostalgia of Ryecroft:

"The Christmas bells drew me forth this morning. With but half-formed purpose, I walked through soft, hazy sunshine towards the city, and came into the Cathedral Close, and, after lingering awhile, heard the first notes of the organ, and so entered" (Winter, XIX).

Concluding thoughts

No reconstruction of everyday events in a past life can be more than suggestive. For all its nine published volumes, Gissing's correspondence is partial and one-sided, subject to periodic culls like the one he implemented prior to leaving Exeter: "Spent day in reading my collections of old letters. Burnt a great many."[43] Nor is his diary continuous or comprehensive. We might expect the mundanities of shopping and cooking to register only when there was nothing more interesting to mention. Nevertheless, in combination with the less personal records of censuses, directories, newspapers, and local histories, we can start to repopulate and reimagine Gissing's Exeter.

Gissing may have considered his time in Exeter wasted, yet as well as completing three novels – two (*Born in Exile* and *The Odd Women*) acknowledged first-rank and the third (*Denzil Quarrier*) undeserving of the relative neglect it has suffered – and starting many more, some of which bore fruit after his return to London (*In the Year of Jubilee* and the parts of "The Iron Gods" that contributed to *Eve's Ransom*), his personal experiences were not as negative as he later portrayed them – the walks with Edith early in their marriage, his own growing affinity with his son, and the momentary pleasures, such as those recalled, however refracted, in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.* Walter Grahame claimed, recalling long afterwards his visit in March 1893, that Gissing "appeared to be very comfortable in his home. He seemed busy and happy, was in good health and getting on well with the work he had in hand. His wife was evidently devoted to him, and he was very proud of his baby son."[44] Perhaps Gissing was good at putting up a front, or Grahame was a less than perceptive young man. Yet Gissing returned to Devon, not only in his imagination, but also physically, staying at Budleigh Salterton to recuperate for nearly four months in 1897. In early April, he wrote to Walter: "Yesterday I went to Exeter, and saw the little old house in which you were born, and where I often carried you about when you were too young to speak a word or to know who I was. Some day I hope we shall go and look at the house together."[45] Whether they did when Walter and Margaret visited later that month, we shall never know, since his diary is silent for this period, but Gissing's subsequent allusions to Devon and Exeter, in his correspondence and in *Ryecroft*, continue to mix nostalgia, disdain and regret.

[1] As in the two preceding essays (in July and October 2019), my principal sources for Gissing's time in Exeter are his published *Letters* and *Diary*: Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas (eds.), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990-1996); Pierre Coustillas (ed.), *London and the Life of Literature in Late-Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978).

[2] Variously recorded in his *Diary* on pp. 236-237, 242, 262, 264, 266-267, 276-277, 280-281, 290-291, 301, 304 (17, 21, 27 January, 19 March, 26 November, 14, 18 December 1891; 2, 9, 14 January, 19 April, 11 May, 29 June, 2, 6, 18 July, 30 November, 1 December 1892; 5 April, 12 May 1893).

[3] For medical approval of 'Mincasea' see C. H. F. Routh, "Animal substitutes for women's milk," *British Medical Journal*, 10 April 1858, p. 298; "Preparations, Inventions, etc," *Nursing Record & Hospital World*, 24 December 1898, p. 518.

[4] Recorded in Gissing's *Diary* on pp. 265, 276, 291, 299, 304 (23 December 1891; 23 April, 10 December 1892; 21 March, 12 May 1893).

[5] *Letters*, 4, p. 277 (7 March 1891). In other letters, pp. 257, 262, 302 (19-20 January, 21 June 1891), he noted the price of butter in Exeter – 1/9 a lb. in January, but only 10^{d} a lb in June; and in *Letters*, 5, p. 83 (30 December 1892) he complained about the impossibility of getting new eggs.

[6] *Diary*, pp. 236-237, 239-240, 290 (15, 25 January, 15, 22 February 1891; 24-25 November 1892).

[7] *Kelly's Directory of Devonshire* (London: Kelly & Co., 1889), p. 169; *Besleys Post Office Directory of Exeter and Suburbs for 1894-5*, p. 18.

[8] Thomas Rowell Cornish, briefly Gissing's near neighbour in Prospect Park, had moved with his wife, Susan, to 5 St James's Place, Old Tiverton Road by the time of the April 1891 census. Immediately south of St James's Place was a short terrace of three substantial houses, including 'Stokeleigh,' the home of James Knill, a stockbroker but, more importantly for our purposes, the secretary of the Eastgate Coffee Tavern. In November 1900, only a month before Thomas Rowell Cornish died, Knill proposed, and Cornish seconded, the nomination of the Progressive candidate for a vacancy on the City Council. By 31 March 1901, the next census date, the newly widowed Susan Cornish had been joined in what was now 25 Old Tiverton Road, by her unmarried daughter, Miss Mary Cornish, by then aged 43. On the basis of Cornish's and Knill's connections, it is tempting to infer that Miss Mary Cornish in 1901 was the same person as Miss M. Cornish, the manageress of the Coffee Tavern. But a definitive link awaits a further venture into the Exeter archives.

[9] C. W. Hawes, *Hawes' Hand Book to Temperance Hotels* (London: National Temperance Publication Depot, 1888); *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette Daily Telegram*, 30 May 1881, p. 3. I am grateful to my UCL Geography colleague, James Kneale, for the Hawes reference and for advice on the connections between coffee taverns and the temperance movement.

[10] "The New London Inn, London Inn Square" and "The Royal Clarence Hotel, Cathedral Close" in David Cornforth (ed.), *Exeter Memories*, online at http://www.exetermemories.co.uk /em/new_london_inn.php and http://www.exetermemories.co.uk/em/_pubs/royal_clarence.php.

[11] Personal communications from Michael Anson, Archive Manager, Bank of England Archive, and Dr Duncan Needham and Professor Martin Daunton, University of Cambridge.

[12] *Diary*, pp. 245-247, 257, 263-265, 267, 277, 281, 301, 307 (25-27 April, 4, 17 May, 5 October, 9-10, 21, 30 December 1891; 17 January, 8, 11 May, 11 July 1892; 7 April, 18 June 1893).

[13] *Exeter Flying Post*, 3 May 1890, p. 3; 19 August 1893, p. 6; *Western Times*, 15 August 1893, p. 8.

[14] *Diary*, p. 271 (28 February 1892).

[15] *Kelly's Directory* (1889), p. 183; *Besleys Directory for 1894-5*, pp. 104, 192; "The Destruction of Bedford Circus" by 'wolfpaw' in Demolition Exeter, online at http://demolition-exeter.blogspot.com/2010/09/destruction-of-bedford-circus.html.

[16] W. J. West, *George Gissing in Exeter* (Exeter: Exeter Rare Books, 1979), p. 10.

[17] *Diary*, pp. 262-263 (2-5 December 1891).

[18] *Kelly's Directory of Devonshire & Cornwall* (London: Kelly & Co., 1893), pp. 189, 193, 216, 260, 908, 965. Today's Bampfylde Street is a product of post-war planning; Bampfylde Street in the late nineteenth century was a narrow lane running south out of High Street opposite Castle Street.

[19] *Diary*, pp. 234, 236, 307 (29 December 1890; 12-13 January 1891; 15 June 1893).

[20] Leamington History Group, "Mousell Brothers, Removal Contractors and Storers" online at http://leamingtonhistory.co.uk/mousell-brothers-removal-contractors-and-storers/. See also the advertisements online at Grace's Guide to British Industrial History: https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Mousell_Brothers.

[21] *Diary*, p. 239 (11 February 1891). See also *Letters*, 4, p. 271 (17 February 1891).

[22] I have used the word order and spelling of these villages as they appear on present-day maps.

[23] *Diary*, p. 232 (12 December 1890). For a concise guide to Hooker, see "Richard Hooker" on *Wikipedia,* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Hooker. For a more academic evaluation, see A. S. McGrade, "Hooker, Richard (1554-1600)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), online at https://www-oxforddnb-com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-13696?rskey=JVzADV&result=1.

[24] Bouwe Postmus (ed.), *George Gissing's Scrapbook* (Amsterdam: Twizle Press, 2007), p. 441.

[25] *Diary*, p. 245 (27 April 1891).

[26] *Ibid*., p. 243 (5 April 1891); *Letters*, 4, p. 283 (12 April 1891).

[27] *Diary*, p. 282 (19 July 1892).

[28] *Western Times*, 20 July 1892, p. 4; *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, 22 July 1892, p. 2.

[29] *Letters*, 4, p. 256 (19 January 1891).

[30] *Ibid*., p. 261 (20 January 1891).

[31] *Diary*, p. 305 (15 May 1893).

[32] Martial, *Epigrams*, V, xx, line 13: "They perish and are reckoned." In the context of the clock, "the hours (and days) pass and are reckoned to our account."

[33] *Exeter Itinerary and General Directory* (Exeter: T & H Besley, 1828), pp. 24, 122-123.

[34] *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, 25 April 1884, p. 1; *Exeter Flying Post*, 29 January 1889, p. 1; Hazel Harvey, *Discovering Exeter 4: Pennsylvania* (Exeter: Exeter Civic Society, 1984), p. 19.

[35] "Northernhay Park and Rougemont Gardens" on Cornforth, *Exeter Memories*, online at http://www.exetermemories.co.uk/em/_parks/northernhay.php.

[36] Trevor Falla, *Discovering Exeter 3: Heavitree* (Exeter: Exeter Civic Society, 1983), p. 19.

[37] *Exeter Flying Post*, 26 September 1883, p. 5.

[38] According to the 1891 census, Joseph L. Kitchen [*sic*] was chaplain at Wonford Asylum, aged 60, and married to Isabella, 59. Not, therefore, a model for the Rev. Vialls.

[39] *Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette*, 30 October 1891, p. 3.

[40] *Western Times*, 24 September 1891, p. 3.

[41] *Diary*, p. 243 (3 April 1891).

[42] Jacob Korg (ed.), *George Gissing's Commonplace Book* (New York: New York Public Library, 1962), p. 63. The observation is dated March 1892.

[43] *Diary*, p. 305 (28 May 1893).

[44] *Letters*, 4, p. 287, fn. 3.

[45] *Letters*, 6, p. 261 (3 April 1897).

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Chit-Chat

If Gissing had one blind spot, it was his dislike of George Moore and his realistic fiction of the 1880s and 1890s. It seems that his negative reaction to Moore's provocative pamphlets *Literature at Nurse* and *Circulating Morals*, which attacked the monopoly and power of Mudie's Circulating Library, can be attributed to his view that artists and writers should avoid public notoriety. After all, in 1886 he had privately rebuked William Morris to his brother for taking part in a Socialist demonstration at which he was arrested. Even so, and despite the fact that Gissing saw Moore as a rival, it is hard to understand his detrimental comment in his *Diary* about his 1894 novel, *Esther Waters*. On 10 December 1894, he wrote: "Read 'Esther Waters.' Some pathos and power in latter part, but miserable writing. The dialogue often grotesquely phrased." By the way, one would think from reading the *Diary* and the 9 volumes of Gissing's letters that the two novelists never actually met. In fact, on 25 June 1896, he and Moore both attended the Cosmopolis dinner at the Savoy Hotel. The *Belfast News-Letter* reported on the occasion as follows:

> M. Fernand Ortmans, the editor of this international monthly [*Cosmopolis*], entertained a number of his contributors and literary men at the Savoy Hotel last week. Mr. Frederic Harrison, Mr. Justin McCarthy, Mr. Andrew Lang, Mr. Colvin, Mr. Archer, Mr. George Gissing, Mrs. Sidney Low, Mr. "Anthony Hope," Mr. Harold Frederic, Mr. Yeats, Mr. Arthur Symons, Mr. Pennell, Mr. Wedmore, Mr. Street, Mr. Zangwill, Mr. George Bernard Shaw, Mr. Maarten Maartens, Mr. Geo. Moore, Mr. Fisher Unwin, and Mr. Henry Norman were among the guests.

Gissing wrote in his *Diary* that same evening:

> Went up to the Cosmopolis dinner at the Savoy, a great assembly. New acquaintances: Bryce, Justin McCarthy, Nisbet Bain (who sat next to me), [Israel] Zangwill. Saw Andrew Lang for the first time, but no speech with him. Met Frederic Harrison after a lapse of 6 or 7 years. He made a speech, and a sadly dull one—ponderous, slow. Zangwill decidedly a good fellow, as I have always felt from his books. Home by last train.

It is, of course, no surprise that he doesn't mention seeing George Moore there.

"Dyce Lashmar and I are very old acquaintances": Keir Hardie on Gissing's *Our Friend the Charlatan*

MARKUS NEACEY
Berlin

Contemporary urban studies, newspaper articles, and public lectures, among other sources, have revealed over time that a Liberal Prime Minister and a leading Socialist politician, a legal adviser, a civil servant, a social researcher, a philanthropist, and a churchman, namely William Ewart Gladstone, Henry Hyde Champion, Eliza Orme, Clara Collet, Charles Booth, Edith Sichel, and F. W. Farrar saw much that was relevant to their spheres of activity and observation in Gissing's working-class and realistic novels. Just over thirteen years ago in the October 2006 issue of our *Journal*, Pierre Coustillas recorded the noteworthy fact that yet another socially active contemporary, James Keir Hardie, the Scottish politician who founded the Labour Party, had read *Our Friend the Charlatan*. Coustillas cited the following sentence (*GJ*, 42:4 (2006), p. 42) which Hardie's biographer, William Stewart, had included in the 1925 Independent Labour Party edition of his book, *J. Keir Hardie* (first published October 1921, p. 201): "'The spirits of the living and the dead whom I revere are here. Let the scoffers and the Dyke [Dyce] Lashmars sneer (referring, of course, to the character of that name in Gissing's book).'" I have now been able to locate Keir Hardie's full response to Gissing's 1899 novel, which is not merely the one sentence quoted above, but in fact both a lengthy response to reading *Our Friend the Charlatan* and a major endorsement of the novel's treatment of late-Victorian political and social charlatanry.

Keir Hardie's reading of *Our Friend the Charlatan* is especially significant because it provides the Gissing scholar with the perspective of an unschooled and self-taught man of working-class origin. For, unlike Gladstone, Champion, Orme, Collet, Booth, Sichel, and Farrar, who all came from wealthy or comfortable backgrounds, Hardie was brought up in an impoverished household. He began his working life as a baker's delivery boy at seven, worked as a miner at Hamilton from age eleven into his late twenties, and then Richard Mutimer-like agitated as a leading spokesman in protest against the capitalist mine owners and for improved wages and working conditions for his fellow miners. In 1879 the mine owners tried to blacklist him, just as Mutimer was cast out by his employers, but Hardie was able to establish himself as the leader of the Hamilton miners' union. Later he led strikes in Lanarkshire and eventually turned to journalism to support himself. Throughout the 1880s he tried to form a powerful union of Scottish miners. By 1888 he stood as an

Independent Labour candidate in Mid-Lanarkshire, and in 1893 was one of the founding members and the leader of the Independent Labour Party. Thus, as a far more successful Richard Mutimer, his view of Gissing's third political novel after *Demos* and *Denzil Quarrier* is especially worthy of notice. Hardie wrote the article, quoted in full below, for his occasional "Between Ourselves" Saturday column in the *Labour Leader* newspaper which he edited from its founding as *The Miner* in 1887 until 1904. His positive reaction to Gissing's novel was published on Saturday, 21 June 1902, p. 155.

To such as may be on the outlook for a really good tale I can recommend Our Friend the Charlatan, by George Gissing. It can be bought at any of Smith's railway bookstalls just now for one shilling. It is the only tale of Mr. Gissing's which I have read, and I cannot, therefore, say how it compares with his other writings, but, that apart, this book, judged merely as a tale, is an excellent bit of workmanship. The characters are all alive; they all speak and act like human beings; there is very little padding, and no artificial far-fetched mating at the end. All this gives the work a sense of reality – much as one gets from a well-told autobiography. The strongest character in the book is that of a woman, Constance Bride, but, unlike George Meredith, Mr. Gissing does not single out the sex for special honours either in staying power or strength of will. On the whole, in this book the women show to most advantage; but those who do are all abnormal cases, whereas Meredith takes the average common everyday type, and shows them to be in times of trial clearer in judgment – some would say intuition, and I won't quarrel with such – and possessed of more stamina than men.

The mere story part of the book is soon told. Dyce Lashmar, the son of a hard, soulless woman, and a weak but good man, is a detestable prig, who poses as a Socialist. He despises the common herd, and having read La Cité Moderne, in which M. Jean Izoulet attempts to prove that true Socialism, interpreted in the light of biology, means the evolution of certain castes corresponding to the existing divisions of society, he adopts this as a working theory, and palms it off as being entirely the product of his own brain. Lady Ogram, a lady with a past, has, in her old age, turned Liberal, and having quarrelled with Mr. Robb, the Tory member for her division, finally decides on making Mr. Dyce Lashmar the Liberal candidate. Constance Bride, who acts as Lady Ogram's private secretary, and who had been a sweetheart of Lashmar's, when both were younger, and who is a woman of remarkable willpower, qualified by a very human touch of womanly feeling, has been the means of bringing these two together, and Lady Ogram makes up her mind to marry them. She has decided to leave her fortune to Miss Bride, to be used in

the way that young lady sees best for furthering certain pet schemes of hers. Meanwhile Lashmar has incurred financial obligations to Mrs. Woolstan, a yellow-haired, freckled-faced widow, and has also fallen in love, as far that is as his nature will permit, with May Tomalin, who is Lady Ogram's grandniece, and is expected by him to inherit the bulk of that lady's wealth. In trying to keep in touch with Constance Bride and May Tomalin, so as to be able to marry whichever of them will bring him most, he naturally loses both, and has to be content with the widow and her freckles. He also loses the election. Lord Dymchurch and Mrs. J. Toplady are interesting figures who play minor parts, as does also Mr. Breakspear, the editor of the local Liberal newspaper. Dymchurch has a title, some brain power joined to wide human sympathies, but no money. Mrs. Toplady has money, plenty of wit, and a cynical humour which she gratifies by playing at politics. Out of such materials it will be seen that, given the master hand, there is plenty of scope for much portrayal of character, and Mr. Gissing uses his opportunities to the full. With keen insight and much knowledge of men and movements, he has succeeded in laying bare a phase of the Socialist movement which is not without its menace.

The charm of the book to me lies in the fact that I know most of its characters intimately. For years they have bored, amused, or cheered me in turn. Dyce Lashmar and I are very old acquaintances. I know him in every big town, and sometimes, though rarely, in the country. He is a fellow of fairly good parts. Unlike his father, he was, as portrayed in this book, not born merely to keep himself alive and propagate his species. He means well, and believes himself a very important person. Sometimes, often, in real life, he is an insufferable egotist, at others, a thin cynic, and oftenest an unmitigated nuisance. But all the time he is a man without a soul. All his little life is lived upon the surface. Of the capacity for sacrifice he has none; that touch of human feeling, which is, after all, the true test of the Socialist spirit, is not his. He is always a purist or an extremist – until temptation comes his way. He has always a reason which satisfies himself for yielding to circumstances, and follows his tortuous course until he works himself out of every confidence he ever inspired, and finally ends as a successful place-hunter. Yes, Dyce Lashmar abounds in our midst, and is often the cause of much mischief. His thin philosophy, innate selfishness, lack of sense of duty or depth of conviction make him very repellant, even before he becomes irretrievably lost; for in Dyce, as in everyone, there is the element of good if only it could be touched in time, and wrought into active play. As he is, he is a "product of the times," a somewhat disconcerting one to most of us. I would like to have the the courage to name three of our Dyce Lashmar's, whose image is very present to my mind at this moment, but my courage is not equal to the occasion.

May Tomalin is also a plentiful product of our age. She has been to Girton, and has been impressed with the need for doing "something for the poor." She wants to be a Socialist, provided it can be made to harmonise with things as they are. She has "worked a good deal at science," and devotes half-an-hour a day to Herbert Spencer. She is a member of a society in Northampton for helping the poor. One day, she tells, she went to visit "a dreadfully poor home, where the people, I'm sure often suffer from hunger." She had no money to give them; besides, giving money is demoralising, so she "sat down and told the poor woman all about the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales," and came away feeling that she "had done some good." May Tomalins, bless you, are as plentiful as soot in London air. Constance Bride is another and a different and rarer type. Struggle and sincerity have developed in her an almost iron will, and yet she remains human, with a nature, which, from its depths, cries out in anguish for sincerity and sympathy – and cries in vain. I know but two such women, and I pity them. If ever human being stood alone these do. Cut off from the multitude of both sexes with whom they have yet to mix and work, they occupy in their inner being a pinnacle so exalted that it were better for them did the rest of the race not exist. Then the awful sense of loneliness which they must feel would not be theirs. But they have the saving sense of humour, and so they continue to live. But none the less these are the true martyrs of progress. It is to such that the world owes all it has or is.

More I would fain say about this charming book, with its searching analysis and healthy tone, but for the rest the reader must go to the volume itself, as time and space are already exhausted. But I must be permitted one more paragraph. These jottings are made this week in the silence and solitude of my London mansion, which is the envy of all who have seen it. Outside the barking of a dog is the only sound which disturbs the clammy night air. Despite an eighth of an acre of tempting sloping roof the toms and tabbies keep respectful silence. Within, a fire burns cheerily, and the kettle sings on the hob. The flickering candle light throws on to the walls quavering shadows from the tall, white-edged, and yellow-breasted Margarets (Horse-gowans), the red seeding stalks of the common sorrel, the dropping yellow buttercups, and the graceful long grasses which fill two crystal gilt measures and a brown mottoed beer jug. Here and there big purple bells and ruby roses send a touch of needed colour. From the top of the tea caddie on the mantle shelf, within the deep recess of the ingle book, the dual face of Ralph Waldo Emerson, fashioned by the skilful hands of Sydney H. Morse, farmer, philosopher, sculptor, Socialist, looks sternly philosophic from his right eye across at Walt Whitman – a plaque containing a perfect replica of whose features from the same master-hand hangs opposite – whilst with his left eye the genial philosopher winks roguishly

at Robert Burns in his solitary corner near the window. Florence Grove lives in the two pictures which adorn the wall, as does Caroline Martyn in the transparency, for which I was long ago indebted to our energetic comrade, Swift, of Leeds; whilst big, warm-hearted Larner Sugden's presence can be felt in the little oak table, with its quaint carvings. On an angle near the fire can be seen to-night a lithographed card from Edward King of Great Britain and Ireland and the Greater Britains beyond the Seas inviting a certain Scotch lassie, not yet out of her teens, to come to Westminster Abbey on a day named to see him duly anointed King. But rebel blood will assert itself, and she has laughed contemptuously at the notion of keeping such a tryst, and has gone off instead to gather seaweed at Musselburgh. And the fact gladdens me. There will be thus two vacant places in the Abbey on that eventful day. Yes, my mansion is perfect. The spirits of the living and the dead whom I revere are here. Let the scoffer and the Dyce Lashmars sneer. To me it is as much a fact that this room was built for me hundreds of years ago as it would have been had Robert Williams drawn the plans to my orders, and A. J. Penty superintended the erection of the building. From which it will be inferred that the "primitive instincts" of the race are still strong in me. So be it. And now, as Big Ben has tolled one, and the dog has ceased to bark, I will smoke one pipe more, and then to bed.

KEIR.

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Book Review

John Gatt-Rutter, Luigi Gussago, Brian Zuccala (eds.), Susan Bassnett (pref.), George Gissing. *Racconti americani*. Roma: Nova Delphi, 2019. Pp. 280. ISBN 978-88-97376-75-0. 12,00 Euros.

Translating Gissing Today

This book confirms the upsurge of interest in Gissing's works among European and extra-european scholarship. If recent studies have focused on the writer's novels, the volume that is being here reviewed, edited by John Gatt-Rutter, Luigi Gussago, and Brian Zuccala, is the first translation into Italian of Gissing's American short stories. As is known, a few scholars, like Robert Selig, have paved the way for further research on Gissing's American short stories, which are still unknown to most readers. This translation contributes to making Gissing better known in Italy and widening the perspectives for analysis of a major late-Victorian writer. It is a collection of

twenty stories written during the writer's American "exile" in New York and Chicago. The exhaustive introduction by Susan Bassnett, about the translation of Gissing's works, is followed by the editors' essay, "George Gissing dimenticato e riscoperto," (p. 11, "George Gissing, forgotten and rediscovered": when not specified, the translation of the Italian quotations from the text is mine), which suggests new research horizons.

In particular, Bassnett discloses the numerous problems connected with the translation of Gissing's short stories. Being often compared to Zola, owing to his realistic writing, Gissing does not lend himself to univocal interpretations. His style, in fact, overarching three decades, reveals the remarkable changes that characterise the evolution of his writing. The main problem that stands out when one translates Gissing is represented by his variegated style and vocabulary; these stories are the writer's first attempts at writing fiction for publication, as well as his "melting pot of ideas in embryo" (Barbara Rawlinson, "Buried Treasure: George Gissing's Short Fiction," in *A Garland for Gissing*, ed. Bouwe Postmus (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), p. 34). They present a number of archaisms and colloquialisms, whose translation and "contextualisation" in the cultural background of the twenty-first century turns out to be a challenging task. As Bassnett claims, "Tradurre significa prendere decisioni," (p. 8, "translating means making decisions") thus stressing the translator's difficult task, his or her work does not only consist in the simple transposition from the source language to the target language, but requires also a suitable stylistic and literary approach. What makes the translation of the stories more difficult, according to Bassnett, is that Gissing often employs slang and regional phrases. Since colloquialisms and idiolects evolve more rapidly than literary language, the translator takes up a complex challenge in order to "match" the linguistic features of the source language and the target language, over a time span that covers more than one century.

The editors give precious information about the writer's literary style and even "welcome" less "learned" readers in Gissing studies. They provide the main features of the stories, characterised by various narrative traditions: "[…] il tema dello scorcio paesaggistico 'esotico' […]; l'arte figurativa e il felice connubio metanarrativo […] fra ritratto e realtà; l'amore frutto del caso, dell'errore o del complotto; il germe della corruzione che si alimenta all'interno delle mura domestiche" (pp. 12-13, "the theme of 'exotic' landscapes […]; figurative arts and the metanarrative mixture between portraits and reality; love, which is determined by chance, mistake or plot; the 'seed' of corruption, which increases within domestic walls"). The editors devote, in their essay, a large section to previous Italian translations of Gissing's works, mainly the novels; in doing so, they argue that any Italian

reader can realise that the writer opposes some of the most common Victorian conventions, in that "[…] si allontana dal tracciato letterario tipicamente 'vittoriano'" (p. 14, "[…] he moves away from the typical Victorian literary peculiarities"). Such an unconventional fin-de-siecle attitude and the numerous autobiographical elements stand out in the first story, "Le colpe dei padri. Un racconto in tre capitoli," ("The Sins of the Fathers: a Story in Three Chapters") in which, as occurs in other stories, a casual event, like the protagonist's encounter with a sad lady one evening, represents the pretext for developing an intertwined plot. The "ingredients" of this story mix typical Victorian diegetic elements, like misunderstandings or minor plot strands to manipulate the course of the events, with innovative narrative devices, which "emphasize" the minor characters' dignity. As Bassnett claims, "[…] Virginia Woolf […] riconobbe al romanziere di Wakefield l'abilità di far 'pensare' i suoi personaggi" (pp. 13-14, "Virginia Woolf […] attributed to the novelist from Wakefield the ability to make his characters 'think'"). Leonard Vincent, the protagonist of the story, partly follows Gissing's own itinerary; he moves to America to teach, is deceived by his father, who lies to him in a letter about Laura's death, his former British girlfriend. In the end, Laura throws him into a river, thus embodying the prototype of a new woman, with her own personality, whose initial weakness turns into the strength to take revenge on her former boyfriend. The story suggests a first intercultural comparison between the English and American contexts as well, and takes the reader beyond the horizons of England. And in fact, Leonard's American girlfriend, Minnie, claims that, compared with Europeans, Americans are silly people.

In addition to the intercultural theme, other stories confirm Gissing's passion for aesthetics and visual arts, and speak to the reader by means of his ekphrastic language. "Il ritratto," ("The Portrait"), for instance, represents the communicative channels between reality and the portrayed subjects. The opening of the story anticipates Wilde's aesthetic remarks on art for art's sake: "Robert Southey, stai sempre a guardare quel dipinto! […] Non posso fare a meno di ammirare il quadro […] esercita su di me un fascino che non riesco a spiegarmi" (p. 189, "Robert Southey, you are always standing before that picture! […] I cannot help admiring the picture […] it has a fascination for me which I cannot explain to myself" (cf. Robert L. Selig, *George Gissing, Lost Stories from America*. Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992, p. 129). The beautiful girl that is portrayed leads Robert to find the real one, and help her and her mother to get the house back, as stated in her father's will. Art, therefore, apparently blurs reality and people's identity, but turns out to be a helpful key of interpretation of reality itself, in that it offers the solution to disentangle complex situations and problems. Another similar

example can be found in "Il ritratto misterioso" ("The Mysterious Portrait") where the portrait generates doubles and déjà vu, thus reawakening old memories and resemblances and disclosing, at the same time, the mysteries that art raises. Harry, who is asked by a client to portray a girl, provides the client with the "clues" to find his granddaughter by means of the painting itself. In this and other stories, like the previous one, art magnifies the playful use of mirrors and doppelgängers, it is the key to the solution of misleading situations. The ambiguities created by art highlight the different perspectives and overtones that characterise reality. Art, therefore, is to Gissing the means to explore the deepest strata of a specular reality, a heterotopic reality, using Foucault's term.

The evoking powers of heterotopic spaces emerge in "La figlia dell'artista" ("The Artist's Child"), a story about Julius Trent, who was "[…] un artista, di talento senza dubbio, ma senza successo" (p. 198, "[…] an artist; talented, without doubt, but unsuccessful," cf. Selig 1992, 59). The story revolves around Trent's painting, which portrays his dead daughter and, as such, stands for a parallel place, the heterotopic reproduction of a place that does not exist. The picture overlaps life and death, in that it evokes a dead girl with the features of a living creature. This story proves that the aesthetic leitmotif is employed by Gissing not only to investigate the minutiae of an apparently known reality, but is also the means to set up a dialogue with the places and the people of his affective world. The evocative power of beauty, in fact, is illustrated both by the pictures and by the charming landscapes of the British countryside in "Immagine di una costiera inglese" ("An English Coast-Picture"). The Bamborough area, in Northumberland, is depicted through the eyes of the first person narrator, and can be read as a guidebook to the coastal village and to the Farne islands. Since the narrator describes a journey around the area, the story expresses the writer's nostalgia for his motherland and its uncontaminated landscapes. Surrounded by the "Americanness" of the cultural elements of the New World, Gissing writes this story to conjure up the British environment: "E qui nel Nuovo Mondo siedo spesso a pensare a Bamborough, alle sue vie tranquille, al suo nobile castello, […] ai lunghi tratti di sabbia fulgida e rovente, […] e alle tenebrose Isole Farne, terra di gabbiani e di urie" (p. 226, "And here in the New World I often sit and think of Bamborough, with its quiet streets, its lordly castle, […] of the long stretches of glistening, scorching sand; […] and of the dark, gloomy Farne Islands, the land of gulls and guillemots," cf. Selig 1992, 94). The writer clearly expresses his allegiance to his British heritage. Immersed in the chaotic atmosphere of the New World, and isolated in his memories of his native land, he evokes the beauty of his country, by means of his friend's, Jack's, pictures and sketches of the British

landscapes. Art, therefore, is the means employed by the writer to set up a communicative channel with the heterotopic dimension of his life, an immaterial world that resembles the real one.

Gissing "re-writes" his condition of an exile in "A Test of Honor" ("Una prova d'onore"), in which the microcosm of the Woodlows' house is not open to "strangers." Mrs Woodlow and her daughter, in fact, live alone, since the former had sent her husband away, many years before, for having committed a crime. The exiled husband is not allowed by Mrs Woodlow to join his family, for the sake of the family's moral integrity. The microcosm of the Woodlows stands, therefore, for a private space, whose everyday stability cannot be spoilt by the invasion of the "other." Gissing recreates himself in Mr Woodlow, in his vain attempt to re-establish harmony in his native country. The contrast between the private space of the Woodlow house and the outer space that surrounds it imperceptibly recalls the opposition between the British spaces and the American ones. The theme of exile in the French setting prevails in "R.I.P." as well, whose protagonist is the victim of his brother's manipulation and who as a result loses everything, even including his wife-to-be, who escapes and dies. As he claims at the end of the story, "[…] da allora sono un vagabondo su questa terra" (p. 65, "I have been a wanderer since then in this world"). Other stories, like "La tentazione di Joseph Yates," ("Joseph Yates' Temptation") represent his financial problems and his constant need for money through the protagonist Yates, who complains about his low wage. Gissing dwells on the protagonist's temptation to steal a cheque that he finds in the company he works for, but is then awarded for his good action (he has his boss meet his family) and his wage is increased.

The Victorian diegetic elements predominate, in the form of epistolary communication, in "Un terribile errore" ("A Terrible Mistake"), as characterised by a mistake committed by one of the protagonists. The mistake is revealed when the protagonist realised that he had exchanged the letters he meant to send, respectively, to the woman he was hoping to marry and to his rival. The misunderstandings and "miscommunications" are later sorted out and clarified, thus turning a misunderstanding into a happy ending, thus an Austenian plot resolution.

Writing about the twenty stories included in this book is by no means an easy task, and the lack of space has forced me to make a selection, which is not intended as a "list," aimed at cutting out other no less stimulating stories. This collection of stories is the result of the "joint work" among British and Italian scholars, whose valuable contribution within the international field of research suggests new perspectives for analysis. After an attentive comparison of the English version of some of these stories with their Italian translation, I

would like to highlight the pertinent choice of the vocabulary employed by the translators, who have followed a literal approach. These stories read like the faithful translation of their original texts and reproduce the denotative aspect of the vocabulary of the source texts.

As regards the most prominent Italian editions of Gissing's works, the editors mention *La terra del sole: lettere dall'Italia e dalla Grecia* (1888-1898), published in 1999, which is a further contribution to Margherita Guidacci's translation of *By the Ionian Sea* (1901), *Sulla riva dello Jonio*, published in 1957. Other more recent translations are *Le donne di troppo*, translated in 2017 by Vincenzo Latronico, and *La vera storia di Will Warburton*, translated by Vincenzo Pepe last year. The volume lists numerous Italian translations of Gissing's stories and novels in the bibliography, thus proving the writer's increasing fame in Italian scholarship. The Italian bibliography, however, is not as rich as the French one, "created," as is well known, by the eminent founder of Gissing studies, Pierre Coustillas. This volume is a precious contribution to the ever-lengthening Italian bibliography on Gissing.

Michele Russo, University of Foggia, Italy

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Notes and News

Wonders will never cease! Jane Smiley, the winner of the 1992 Pulitzer Prize for her novel, *A Thousand Acres* (1991), – she also published a short biography of Charles Dickens in 2002 – recently made a return trip to St Louis (Missouri), the city of her childhood, to visit the famous City Museum. In her travelogue which she wrote for the *New York Times* (14 October 2019), she mentions that she stayed at the Cheshire Hotel, which is, she writes, "an idiosyncratic Tudor-style hotel across from the southwest corner of Forest Park, the site of the 1904 World's Fair." She continues: "I remember eating in the restaurant with my parents; I did not remember the Cheshire's Anglophilia – every room named for an English author. I went looking for my favorites, Nancy Mitford and Anthony Trollope (fourth floor). The more obscure ones, like Elizabeth Gaskell, give the inn an intellectual air. We stayed in the George Gissing room (a volume of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* sat on a side table)."

Just over a decade ago Gissing's later contemporary, Arthur Morrison, was rediscovered in a short biographical booklet, *Arthur Morrison: The Novelist of Realism in East London and Essex*, by Stan Newens, the former

Labour politician. It is now pleasing to report the recent publication of the first serious scholarly biography of this important writer of London working-class novels and crime fiction entitled *Arthur Morrison and the East End: The Legacy of Slum Fictions* by Eliza Cubitt (New York and Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019, 214pp). Routledge advertise the book as follows:

This, the first critical biography of Arthur Morrison (1863-1945), presents his East End writing as the counter-myth to the cultural production of the East End in late-Victorian realism. Morrison's works, particularly *Tales of Mean Streets* (1894) and *A Child of the Jago* (1896), are often discussed as epitomes of slum fictions of the 1890s as well as prime examples of nineteenth-century realism, but their complex contemporary reception reveals the intricate paradoxes involved in representing the turn-of-the-century city.

Arthur Morrison and the East End examines how an understanding of the East End in the Victorian cultural imagination operates in Morrison's own writing. Engaging with the contemporary vogue for slum fiction, Morrison redressed accounts written by outsiders, positioning himself as uniquely knowledgeable about a place considered unknowable. His work provides a vigorous challenge to the fictionalised East End created by his predecessors, whilst also paying homage to Charles Dickens, George Gissing, Walter Besant and Guy de Maupassant. Examining the London sites which Morrison lived in and wrote about, this book is an excursion not into the Victorian East End, but into the fictions constructed around it.

Whilst the biography, for obvious reasons, focuses on Morrison's literary works, it is interesting to note that his fiction-writing career only lasted from 1894 to 1909, even though he lived to be eighty-two. Unfortunately, the price of the book, £115, means that it will only have a very small readership.

Between 22 January and 27 May 2020 Elizabeth Gaskell's House at 84 Plymouth Grove in Manchester is holding a course on "Reading the Nineteenth Century – Fallen Women." The course is described as follows:

Join Sherry Ashworth in entering the world of fallen women in the Victorian novel: when a woman's virtue is compromised, what choices lie open to her? Whose fault is it that she falls in the first place? And what happens to the children born as a result? To answer these questions, we shall be reading Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* followed by George Eliot's *Adam Bede* written just six years later. Then we'll examine three novels from the end of the century,

to see if things were any better – Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, George Gissing's *The Unclassed*, and George Moore's *Esther Waters*. This is a five-month course. You can come to all, one two, three or four of these sessions, to suit your interests. The dates are

22 January: Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth*
26 February: George Eliot's *Adam Bede*
25 March: Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*
22 April: George Gissing's *The Unclassed*
27 May: George Moore's *Esther Waters*

The workshops run from 7-9 p.m. on Wednesdays. Each session is £10, or £45 for all five sessions. There is a discount of £5 for those booking all five sessions. More information can be found at http://elizabethgaskellhouse.co.uk/whats-on/.

From 3-5 October 2019 a conference on "Locating Intersections of Medicine and Mobility in 19th-Century Britain" was held in the Department of English and American Studies at the Friedrich-Alexander Universität in Erlangen (Bavaria). On Saturday, 5 October, Heide Liedke (Queen Mary University of London) gave a lecture entitled "(Mental) Health and Travel: Mary Shelley and George Gissing Crossing Borders."

Katie J. Lumsden who regularly presents Victorian literature she has read on *Youtube* has recently added a video review of "Five Victorian Novels About ... Alcohol." The books she discusses are Gissing's *The Nether World*, Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Anthony Trollope's *Doctor Thorne*, Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, and Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*. You can listen to her comments at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=byoMmSKZaU0.

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Recent Publications

Articles, reviews, etc.

J. C., "The Last Act," *Times Literary Supplement*, 25 October 2019, p. 40.

Robin M. Mako Citarella, "Women's Roles in Mass Literacy, Production, and Sensation in George Gissing's *New Grub Street*," in Elena V. Shabliy, Dmitry Kurochkin, and Karen O'Donnell (eds), *Women's Emancipation*

Writing at the Fin de Siècle (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 193-215.

George Gissing, "Christopherson," in *Soot and Steel: Dark Tales of London*, ed. by Ian Whales (Alconbury Weston, Cams: NewCon Press, 2019), published simultaneously in hb, pb, and e-book editions.

Hannes Hintermeier, "Der Andere Bibliothek: Realismus," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (*Feuilleton*), 9 November 2019, p. 12. This is a paragraph on Gissing's *New Grub Street*, which appeared in Hans Magnus Enzensberger's "Der Andere Bibliothek" series in 1986 entitled *Zeilengeld* using Adele Berger's 1891-1892 translation from the Budapest German-language *Pester Lloyd* newspaper, but revised by Wulfhard Stahl und Helga Herborth. The complete full-page article in *FAZ* is a celebration of "Der Andere Bibliothek" on the occasion of Enzenberger's 90th birthday.

Maria Krivosheina, "Of Blizzards, Pistol Shots, and Fair Smugglers: Russian Fiction and Middlebrow Strategies in the *Strand*," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 52:2 (Summer 2019), pp. 275-293. On pp. 283-286, in a section of her essay headed "Mysterious Doubles: The Roberts Case," the Russian scholar, Krivosheina, discusses the possible influence of Gogol's novella "The Overcoat" and Dostoevsky's "The Double" on Morley Roberts's 1910 short story "The Other Overcoat."

José Díaz Lage, "Continua and disruptions in two late Victorian episodes of female intimacy," in *Victorians: A Journal of Culture and Literature*, 135 (Summer 2019), pp. 88-104.

Zeynep Harputlu Shah, "Passive Resistance in George Gissing's *New Grub Street* and Knut Hamsun's *Sult* [*Hunger*]," *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 18:1 (2019), pp. 95–120.

Wulfhard Stahl, "Űber Sinn und Wert einer Bibliothek. Eduard Bertz in Rugby, Tennessee, 1882-1883," in *Leipziger Jahrbuch zur Buchgeschichte*, Band 27 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019), pp. 265-315.

Tom Ue, "*Writing Place: Mimesis, Subjectivity and Imagination in the Works of George Gissing* by Rebecca Hutcheon," *Victorian Studies*, 61:3 (Spring 2019), pp. 492-494.

Tom Ue, "Moral Perfectionism, Counterfactuals, and the Inky Line in Besant's *All in a Garden Fair* and Gissing's *New Grub Street*," in *Walter Besant: The Business of Literature and the Pleasures of Reform*, ed. by Kevin A. Morrison (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), pp. 205-223.

Tom Ue, "Personal and Political Fainéance in George Gissing's *Veranilda*," in Julian Wolfreys and Monika Szuba (eds.), *Reading Victorian Literature, Essays in Honour of J. Hillis Miller* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), Chapter 8, pp. 184-201.

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Tailpiece: Two Contemporary Reviews of *By the Ionian Sea*

[I provide excerpts below from two contemporary reviews of Gissing's *By the Ionian Sea*, the one negative, the other positive, soon after its publication in book form in 1901, following its serialisation in the *Fortnightly Review* under the title "An Author at Grass." Note the scornful tone inherent in the title of the first piece, not to mention the derisive and unbelievably insensitive reading of Gissing's beautiful phrasing in the passages the reviewer cites, and then remark the fine appreciation of the second review – a little-known one by the then 27-year old Somerset Maugham. Two reviews could scarcely be further apart in their understanding of Gissing's travel narrative.]

Anon, "The Realist's Holiday," *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 27 July 1901, pp. 112-113.

As a novelist Mr. George Gissing is distinguished by a middle-class observation of the middle classes: he writes of dull people, who live in respectably sordid houses, and pursue commonplace existences without regret. He writes joylessly of joyless lives, as if the chronicles of Clapham were all that interested him, and his interest in these was of a grey and sober kind. We open his new book, an account of a certainly rather dreary journey in Calabria, and we read:

Mine is to escape life as I know it and dream myself into that old world which was the imaginative delight of my boyhood. The names of Greece and Italy draw me as no others; they make me young again, and restore the keen impressions of that time when every new page of Greek or Latin was a new perception of things beautiful. The world of the Greeks and Romans

is my land of romance; a quotation in either language thrills me strangely, and there are passages of Greek and Latin verse which I cannot read without a dimming of the eyes, which I cannot repeat aloud because my voice fails me.

[…] So, one realises, Mr. Gissing is at heart what so many realists have been at heart: an impotent worshipper of beauty, which he can only adore in secret, never possess […]

Mr. Gissing's style is without rhythm, without either the warmth or the beauty of life; it is common, tuneless, inexpressive. When he is touched by something beautiful in things or people, his words blunder about helplessly in the attempt to express what he feels. Thus he will speak of "rushing fountains where women drew fair water in jugs and jars of antique beauty." That the sight which he describes really affected him we do not doubt; but he describes it like an impressionable commercial traveller. At times the effect is comic, as when, speaking of some Italian music, he says: "It had the true characteristics of southern song: rising tremolos, and cadences that wept upon a wail of passion; high falsetto notes, and deep tum-tum of infinite melancholy." He describes an "odd little scene" at Squillace, the gambols of a cat and a pig; and seems to find it humorous to speak of the cat as "pussy" and of the pig as "porker." Speaking of the women of Cotrone washing linen in the sea, he says that he saw one of them "wading with legs of limitless nudity." He says "I descried the steamer," and his choice of the word "descried" is characteristic. He has no delicate sense of words any more than he has a delicate sense of rhythm. Something, he says, "put me into happiest mood." That is not good English, and it shows the same slovenliness of mind as the omission of the verb from sentences, such as "[a]n odd little incident." For the most part he writes straightforwardly, with a sense of personal honesty which is pleasant. If sincerity to a quite intelligent view of things were all that one required from a writer of travel-sketches, then Mr. Gissing's book would have great merit. But sincerity of intention is only the beginning of literary fidelity, and Mr. Gissing seems to have felt only average feelings, thought average thoughts and seen with average eyes, while he has certainly recorded his impressions in average words.

W. Somerset Maugham, *A Traveller in Romance: Uncollected Writings 1901-1964* (London: Anthony Blond, 1984), pp.114-115, 117-118. Originally published in the *Sunday Sun*, 11 August 1901, p. 1.

Mr Gissing has ventured to give us something of himself, and consequently his book is charming […] It puts the reader into a pleasant humour to feel

that he has a man of flesh and blood to deal with, and not a vulgar tourist intent only upon filling his notebooks for the manufacture of a volume. And I am pleased that he does not affect to despise the good things of this world, that he has an amiable word to say for his food and drink. In one place Mr Gissing has apologised for dwelling on such details, but no excuse was needed. Nowadays, the strenuous have brow-beaten us, so that we are half afraid to confess our appreciation for the meat we eat and the wine we drink; and it is refreshing to find someone who is not loftily contemptuous of such earthly things. […]

But it is rather a sad story that Mr Gissing has to tell of his wanderings in Southern Italy. He utters an almost constant cry that things have changed. The old beauty is disappearing before the advance of civilisation. Everything is becoming vulgar and up-to-date. […]

But now I must say something about the manner in which Mr Gissing has written his book. I am delighted with his simplicity; for those who care for plain speech are growing fewer every day, and it is a relief to find a book without purple patches, and all the other abominations of fine writing. In descriptions of scenery it is a great temptation to allow the pen to run away with one, to fill one's page with pompous adjectives, to pile up masses of colour; but Mr Gissing, happily, has striven for simplicity, and, indeed, what he had to describe needed no verbiage to make it beautiful. His style seems to me admirably easy, it is harmonious and clear, and well adapted for the expression of his various moods. […]

I read Mr Gissing's book under the pleasantest conditions. I took it with me to the Kentish coast, and read it in the evenings within sight and hearing of the grey sea, my limbs happily tired after the day's golf. And it was a strange contrast to turn my mind, filled with the brilliant colour of Calabria, to this Northern Ocean, cheerless and cold even in mid-July; the sky was like a vault of slate, hanging very low, and at the horizon joining insensibly with the broad, flat stretch of sea. It is good to read sometimes books which are so entirely restful, just as after the turmoil of London, with its unceasing roar, which seems to thunder away even through one's sleep. It is comforting to come to the barren, marshy coast of North Kent, peaceful in its unbroken monotony; it is good after the more vivid mental exercise which the manifold interests of the day force upon one, to seek repose in such quiet and leisurely reading. It freshens one to travel easily with Mr Gissing to these exquisite places with their memories and regrets.

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Subscriptions

The Gissing Journal is published four times a year, in January, April, July, and October. Subscriptions are normally on a two-year basis and begin with the January number.

Rates per annum are as follows:

Individuals (Europe):	£17
Libraries (Europe):	£19
Individuals (ROW):	£21
Libraries (ROW):	£23

Payment can be made in sterling to thegissingjournal@outlook.com via Paypal, by cheque made out to Markus Neacey, or by bank transfer (regarding which please contact the same).

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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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