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The Gissing Journal

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

George Gissing's Dullness by Design

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Commenting on the state of Gissing studies in 1970, Peter J. Keating observed of the late-Victorian author that "few writers of comparable stature can have been rediscovered so often to such little effect" (Keating 393). And indeed, after several decades of scholarly studies and a steady stream of reprints and revelations, it is curious that Gissing's work and life remained unknown to most readers throughout the heyday of Gissing studies in the 1970s and 1980s, and was seldom even then included in University literary curricula. Though somewhat corrected in the last couple of decades, this omission overlooks the writer's visceral focus on the lower and lower-middle classes of London and its suburbs, as well as his literary importance as a transitional figure between realism and modernism. This paper points to both aspects of Gissing's work as factors which distinguish him among his contemporaries, and which make his work relevant and important to modern readers.

Perhaps more than any of his contemporaries, Gissing experimented in conveying the tone and texture of everyday British experience, and of what would become a paradigmatic experience of the industrialised world in the following decades: namely, the experience of boredom. Though not the first in British letters to depict boredom, Gissing may be the first to divorce boredom from moralistic programs of representation. His attention to boredom's presence in daily life is at odds with his eighteenth- and early-to mid-nineteenth-century predecessors, as earlier, more staidly Victorian novels like Dickens' *Bleak House* (1852-1853) and Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876) assign to boredom negative qualities like moral flaccidity and reckless indifference, locating the mood in privileged yet dissipated characters. In Gissing, however, boredom does not act as a veneer under which characters, like Dickens' Lady Dedlock, suffer in silence, or, like Eliot's Grandcourt, hide their quite active, manipulative agendas. Instead, boredom prevails in sympathetic characters as a telltale of their refusal to celebrate and reluctance to participate in a society that values profit, entertainment, and ambition over thought, beauty in art and nature, and the cultivation of human relationships. As a mood, boredom's presence suspends the pace of Gissing's narratives, providing moments for

reflection upon the mismatch between individual temperament and situation, and, more broadly, between human life and capitalist society.

Much of Gissing scholarship has declined to focus on the affective aspect of Gissing's work in favour of the author's biography, however. Often, to discuss Gissing's writing has been at once to discuss his biography, leading the scholar John Peck to conclude that the author "is a remarkably popular novelist with academics who want to write about something other than novels" (Peck, 144). One foresees this thrust of Gissing criticism as early as Henry James' review of his 1897 novel *The Whirlpool*, when James refers with characteristically wilful imprecision to the "individual manly strain" of the novel, and confesses, despite its faults, that it "makes me with an almost nervous clutch quite cling to him" ("London Notes," 443, 438). There is something in the work, James seems to say, that compels us to look beyond it at the man. This mode of reading Gissing was so common by the time of Gissing's death in 1903 that friends and family published pieces to separate the author from his characters. In a 1906 article for *Nineteenth Century*, Austin Harrison remembers his former teacher as a hair-shirted intellectual, nurturing his own misery out of a sense of superiority to the common throng. And yet, Harrison adds, "A gentler nature, a more delightful companion than Gissing never existed" (Harrison, 32). Similarly, and for the same magazine, Gissing's sister Ellen assented to the prevailing description of her brother as "embittered egoist," self-alienated by his ability to see "more deeply into life than his fellow-men" but with an equally deep sense of responsibility, independence, and love for family (Ellen Gissing, 17). In each account we note a tension that would become endemic to Gissing criticism, between acknowledgement of Gissing's personal and artistic flaws, and the critic's admonition that we disregard neither author nor oeuvre because of them. Henry James succinctly summarises this tension in his review, writing, "For this author in general, at any rate, I profess [...] a persistent taste—a taste that triumphs even over the fact that he almost as persistently disappoints me" ("London Notes," 438).

The practice of reading Gissing's novels as autobiography, having taken shape at the turn of the nineteenth century, had become institutionalised in Gissing studies by the 1970s, by which point one biographical novel based on Gissing's life and several biographies and critical studies had been published. The sustained furore in Gissing studies for biographical criticism survived even the heyday of high theory, as is clear in John Halperin's 1977 article "How to Read Gissing": "To read his books without a detailed knowledge of his biography is to read blindfolded. The critic who attempts to deal with Gissing's fiction phenomenologically or from a narrow structuralist approach has little chance of understanding him" (Halperin, 58). Halperin's rationale for

this rather territorial stance is that "[n]o English novelist put more of his own life into his novels than George Gissing" (Halperin, 58). We might object that this rationale for the biographical bent of Gissing studies is thin: certainly every novelist must draw heavily upon "life" if he is to fill the pages of a novel. James develops this notion in his canonical essay "The Art of Fiction," writing: "Experience […] is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web, of the finest silken threads, suspended in the chamber of consciousness and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue […]. [I]t takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations." Here James allots much more to "life" than simply what one has lived through, responding to Walter Besant's lecture of the same title, in which Besant argues that a fiction writer must write only what he himself has experienced.

Certainly, Gissing's novels abound in attitudes, situations, and circumstances nearly identical to his own, including men miserably married to women below their status and education; writers exhausted by tedious and unremunerative literary work; and individuals displaced by their education from their native class but unable to ascend the socio-economic ladder. This heavily autobiographical approach to writing fiction naturally solicits the Besantian approach to criticism, whereby analysis of the fiction is anchored to the life of the author. And indeed, as Peter J. Keating succinctly states, "It does not take many pages of a Gissing novel for the reader to realise that he is less likely to be immersed in a fictional world, than to be forced into a direct confrontation with the author" ("State of Gissing Studies," 393). Decades earlier, in a brief essay on the late-Victorian author, Virginia Woolf describes Gissing as "one of those imperfect novelists through whose books one sees the life of the author faintly covered by the lives of fictitious people. With such writers we establish a personal rather than an artistic relationship" (Woolf). Because his novels are not more general or wide-ranging in their subjects, we fall to "capping the resemblances" between character and author – which is not entirely unpleasant, Woolf adds, for "a little glow of satisfaction comes over us, as if novel-reading were a game of skill in which the puzzle set us is to find the face of the writer" (Woolf). With Gissing, these authors seem to say, the usual critical methods come up short as the text reduces the reader to a mere resemblance-hunter.

But though the novels pave a royal road to the author himself, they do disclose more common scenes and support non-biographical inquiry. More than merely laying out his personal woes in novel form, Gissing structurally and descriptively evokes (and, dare we say, occasionally induces) the lived experience of boredom. This attention to affect makes his fiction distinctive in its context, important to an understanding of its time, and persistent in the mind of its reader. Keating qualifies his own criticism, stating, "In his strengths and

weaknesses he appears to embody many of the most important aspects of late Victorian England, and therefore to offer a much-needed entrance into that neglected period. No other contemporary novelist (however better a novelist he may be) will do as well" ("State of Gissing Studies," 394); likewise, Woolf remarks in her essay that Gissing's power is his ability to "mak[e] his people think, […] to become complex […] to overflow boundaries, to cease to be a 'character,' to merge one's private life in the life of politics or art or ideas. It is the consciousness of these things that makes his books such painful reading; it was this that made it impossible for them to 'attract the subscribers to Mr. Mudie's Library'" (Woolf). It is the "pain" of reading Gissing that much of Gissing studies has declined to emphasise, as well as his abiding unpopularity – in his own day as in ours, his stress on the mundane renders him tedious to the average reader. But Gissing's dullness is by design, and more than the outcome of an unimaginative, resemblance-based approach to writing.

This approach is concerned not merely with describing the mundane. In one of the few instances of his own critical writing, Gissing avers that the novelist should strive "to depict with rigid faithfulness the course of life" as well as "to expose the secrets of the mind, to show humanity in its eternal combat with fate [...] [n]o matter how hideous or heartrending the results" ("The Place of Realism in Fiction," 84). What emerges more forcefully than the sheer physical facts of London life in Gissing's fiction is its affective texture – the invisible but no less present condition of the mind. John Peck highlights Gissing's attention to affect in a rare formal analysis of *New Grub Street*, a novel often valued exclusively for its sociological survey of 1880s London literary society. Though Peck agrees with Peter J. Keating that the novel is important for its self-reflexivity – it is a novel about the business, labour, and heartache of writing and publishing novels – he finds even more noteworthy the fact that it contains "some of the best presented moments of inactivity in the whole of fiction" (Peck, 148). To be sure, the novel is amply typical of its Victorian context: it discloses an interconnected world of characters, many of whose great expectations are made or dashed by matters of marriage and inherited wealth, and all amid the bustle and grime of one of the great world cities. But occasionally the action slows, and ceases. Peck refers to the scene in which Edwin Reardon, Gissing's novelist protagonist, finds that, by sundown of another tedious workday, he has only managed to pen the words "Chapter III": "Up until this point words have rattled forth confidently, but here we are confronted with the novelist with nothing to say. The formal originality is that Gissing has dared to present the sterility of so much of the process of writing by bringing the novel to a complete halt, so that the only encounter is between a man and a blank piece of paper" (Peck, 148). As the novel's pace and scope narrow to the tempo and dimensions of this encounter,

so the reader becomes aware of the grinding passage of time and the writer's dwindling resources. The writer's dreadful urgency become palpable in this later but similar scene:

> [Reardon] wrote a very small hand; sixty written slips of the kind of paper he habitually used would represent [...] a passable three-hundred-page volume. On an average he could write four such slips a day; so here we have fifteen days for the volume, and forty-five for the completed book.
>
> Forty-five days; an eternity in the looking forward. [...] It would certainly not bring him a hundred pounds; seventy-five perhaps. But even that small sum would enable him to pay the quarter's rent, and then give him a short time, if only two or three weeks, of mental rest. […]
>
> The latter alternative was often enough before him. He seldom slept for more than two or three consecutive hours in the night, and the time of wakefulness was often terrible. The various sounds which marked the stages from midnight to dawn had grown miserably familiar to him; worst torture to his mind was the chiming and striking of clocks. Two of these were in general audible, that of Marylebone parish church, and that of the adjoining workhouse. […] After lying awake for awhile he would hear quarters sounding. […] If the hour was complete, he waited anxiously for its number. Two, three, even four, were grateful; there was still a long time before he need rise and face the dreaded task, the horrible four blank slips of paper that had to be filled ere he might sleep again. (*New Grub Street*, 120-121)

I quote this passage at length to give its presentation of anxiety full play. It is not the compounded facts of Edwin's lack of sleep, money, and will to do the work before him – all of which are plainly and frequently stated throughout the narration – that disclose the character's inner and exterior life to the reader, but their circular mobilisation: the incremental measurement of a day's work gives way to a tally of subsequent future earnings, which yields to a count of the weeks of rest and rent these earnings afford, which in turn is cut short by the church clock whose chimes tell the closeness of the workhouse, Edwin's weariness of life, and the coming of the next day, when work resumes. In the midst and at the source of this turmoil, though visually absent because not descriptively present, is a man sitting at his desk or lying awake in the dark. Rather than describing the man in his room, this scene evokes the experience of the relentless necessity of dull work, and extends this experience to a kind of work traditionally considered to be a craft rather than a trade. Whereas many a critic would attribute such scenes' formal airlessness and flat representational style to Gissing's own penury and limited imagination, Peck asserts that "the novel itself, in its form, is the perfect illustration of the problems about novel-writing raised in the content of the novel [...], we understand Edwin through the experience of reading a work in which all the strains of writing a three-volume novel are in evidence" (Peck, 147).

Gissing's occasional collapse of his narrative into eddies of anxiety and doldrums stands out, not only against the conventionality of pace, plot, and

characterisation in the rest of the novel, but also against Victorian novelistic conventions as a whole. Peck thus argues that *New Grub Street* is an experimental as well as a self-reflexive novel, more symbolist than Victorian realist.[1] London is comprised of the usual streets, traffic, buildings, parks, and fog, yes – but also of gray and draughty rooms. Gissing's London is one that seldom sparkles with romance or thrills with intrigue; rather, it is a London host to aimless wandering and profitless sitting-still on the part of overworked, solitary characters. Though set in a world city, *New Grub Street* gives the sense of one's never being able to access that city; in a novel about writing and publishing novels, one is conspicuously far away from the bustle of the publisher's office. John Goode likewise observes that the figure of the consumer is notably absent from a novel about novelists and other writers, "for the overwhelming impression is of writers, reviewers and publishers caught in an ingrown struggle for a market which is divorced both from human effort and from human need" ("Offensive Truth," 131). Effort and need seem to be entirely on the side of the weary producer, his relationship to the market precarious and remote, his viability far from guaranteed. Rather than articulate his principal characters' relationships to their audience or their colleagues, Gissing narrows his focus to the site (and often the sight, the act of staring at the page) of boredom and the isolated and potentially fruitless intellectual toil. *New Grub Street* is about production yet evokes a barren city, a contradiction that provides "a level of richness in the text which can be overlooked if one is too insistent on seeing the novel as a documentary account of literary London" – or, we will add, as a documentary account of Gissing's own life (Peck, 153). What situates Gissing's writing above pure documentation, is his ability to construct spaces, scenes, and portraits imbued with affect.

Gissing's treatment of affect locates his work within the transition from Victorian to Modernist style and substance. In her literary history of boredom, Patricia Meyer Spacks traces boredom's evolution in literature from its unmentionability during the Enlightenment to its role as the signal of a moral problem in the nineteenth century:

> For eighteenth-century thinkers, the moral issue of boredom had concerned the obligation to interest oneself in the life beyond this world. Dr. Johnson's distaste for lethargy marked his conviction of individuals' responsibility to commit themselves to spiritual effort. To acknowledge even the possibility of boredom implies willingness to forgo such effort. Nineteenth-century writers, by contrast, conscious of the ways society forms and threatens the individual, located the moral problem of boredom firmly in the realm of daily experience, suggesting kinds of self-discipline necessary to withstand it and opposing to the flaccid state of disengagement the arduous cultivation of interest or endeavor focused not on the hereafter but on what comes to hand. (Meyer Spacks, 220)

Like his Victorian predecessors and contemporaries, Gissing situates boredom in the realm of daily experience and emphasises its relationship to greater social

ills; he differs, however, in that he does not articulate it as an individual moral problem. Surely, he acknowledges that great self-discipline may be required to withstand boredom's pull – more precisely, he acknowledges the common wisdom that great self-discipline may be required to withstand boredom's pull. But he does not endorse the common wisdom,[2] thus breaking with earlier authors like Dickens and Eliot, whose bored characters, as mentioned above, sport their boredom as masks and mantles, eventually dying under their weight. The absence of a lesson in avoiding boredom is all the more remarkable given that Edwin Reardon does succumb to the mood in *New Grub Street*: the tedium of writing too much to bear, he takes a lowly position as a hospital clerk, his wife leaves him out of shame, his health and earnings decline, and he dies. Or rather: there is a lesson, but it is not about the moral and physical danger of indulging one's anxieties, or that boredom marks the defeated or the boring. Gissing places the blame on societal valuation of the commercial, the now and the new. Here, his narrator addresses a reader with typical Victorian expectations of character, motivation, and plot in this passage from *New Grub Street*:

> The chances are that you have neither understanding nor sympathy for men such as Edwin Reardon. [...] They seem to you inert, flabby, weakly envious, foolishly obstinate, impiously mutinous, and many other things. You are made angrily contemptuous by their failure to get on[.]
>
> But try to imagine a personality wholly unfitted for the rough and tumble of the world's labour-market. From the familiar point of view these men were worthless; view them in possible relation to a humane order of society, and they are admirable citizens. Nothing is easier than to condemn a type of character which is unequal to the coarse demands of life as it suits the average man. [...] You scorn their passivity; but it was their nature and their merit to be passive. (*New Grub Street*, 425-426)

In a reversal more familiarly associated with the second half of the twentieth century, Gissing's narrator states that it is the drop-outs – the functional and affective misfits – who exhibit sanity, while the social order to which they respond is unfit and inhumane.

This perspective was still gaining currency in the mid- to late-Victorian era, as better understanding of poor environmental and economic conditions and their effects on individuals continued to gain traction in public discourse. Accordingly, Gissing's narrative aside does not assume his audience to be ideologically in sync with his subject matter or his perspective on contemporary life. We observe with John Goode in his introduction to the Oxford World's Classic edition of the novel that Gissing is staidly Victorian in his exploration of characters affected by social, economic, and environmental change, and that he was undeniably bourgeois in his high valuation of things like education, family, and work ethic. Yet we also see the commercial imperative rendered as the thing that makes the realisation of these touted Victorian values difficult

or impossible. Boredom in this context signals the failure of a literary marketplace to bring about literary art, and the failure of a capitalist society to bring about ethical conditions of production.

One has greater difficulty in finding *New Grub Street*'s unconventional morality in Gissing's later novel, *In the Year of Jubilee*. Here the narrator more frequently asserts himself as a corrective voice, so that the reader encounters his characters' fascinations with culture through notes of disdain. Peck observes that Gissing's narrators often do not harmonise with his preference for lower- to middle-class subjects; consequently "the unfortunate result for Gissing is that he might appear to be an awful snob" (Peck, 145). We encounter such snobbery on the novel's first page, which, as does that of *New Grub Street*, describes a morning scene of reading in a middle-class household:

> The only books in the room were a few show-volumes, which belonged to Arthur Peachey, and half-a-dozen novels of the meaner kind, wherewith Ada sometimes beguiled her infinite leisure. But on tables and chairs lay scattered a multitude of papers: illustrated weeklies, journals of society, cheap miscellanies, penny novelettes, and the like. […] [W]hen new numbers came in, Ada Peachey passed many hours upon her sofa, reading instalments of a dozen serial stories, paragraphs relating to fashion, sport, the theatre, answers to correspondents (wherein she especially delighted), columns of facetiae, and gossip about notorious people. Through a great deal of this matter Beatrice followed her, and read much besides in which Ada took no interest; she studied a daily newspaper, with special note of […] any concern, great or small, wherein money played a part. (*In the Year of Jubilee*, 5)

The head of household – Arthur Peachey, junior partner in a disinfectant-manufacturing firm – displays the proper books to indicate his grasp of the high cultural imperative to cultivate the self through reading. His wife, Ada Peachey, and her sisters, Beatrice and Fanny French, typify the products of what Gissing refers to as "sham education and mock refinement" (*IYJ*, 7).

The Peacheys' common picture of respectability gets at the heart of Gissing's cultural anxiety, as their reading materials – abundant, fragmented, and disposable – trouble longstanding associations between reading, education, and moral improvement. The Peacheys' reading materials trouble these associations by their fragmented, abundant, and disposable nature. Their variety – "a multitude of papers" in several genres – is remarkable, and yet Gissing concludes his catalogue of the Peacheys' periodicals with "and the like," suggesting that the variety is only a veneer for the dull similitude that unites them under the heading of mass literature. Ada Peachey lends name and face to the anonymous and unserious mass readership evoked in *New Grub Street*, spending hours "reading instalments of a dozen serial stories, paragraphs relating to" all manner of subjects, "answers to correspondents […], columns of facetiae." Her reading materials do not require sustained

attention or further thought – though stationary, Ada is neither invited nor inspired to dwell within her reading and so moves on to the next of many pieces scattered about the living room. That the pieces are scattered renders tangible the necessity of moving through them ("Through a great deal of this matter Beatrice followed her"), and Gissing twice refers to Ada's use of reading as a sort of temporal vehicle, by means of which she advances through extensive domestic time. Upward economic mobility – outwardly indicated in the Peacheys' move from Camberwell Road to De Crespigny Park – is reinforced through a similar yet ongoing process of cultural movement, in both the "going through" of courses at young ladies' educational establishments and the continual rotation of mass literature in their home. Status thus becomes unhinged from traditions of education and self-cultivation: where reading should signify sustained engagement, the Peacheys' printed matter attests to their fragmented attention to ephemera, which nonetheless proclaims itself as the product of cultivation and respectability.

Gissing's complaint is not that inferior people like the Peacheys and the Frenches ascend to middle-class respectability and bring their print trash with them; it is rather that the social environment is too poor, too invested in the ephemeral to yield anything but rubbish. If the Peacheys and sisters French could muster the inner resources to sit down with a Dickens novel, *Robinson Crusoe*, or other available, hearty English classics, they would strengthen their aptitudes for paying attention and gird their minds with more coherent formulations of the world. Mass culture relentlessly weakens such resources, however; Gissing's understanding of culture's deleterious effects tempers his narrator's evident snobbery.

That *Jubilee*'s protagonist, Nancy Lord, is able to withstand the intrusions of culture despite her middling education and lack of patience for heavy reading, points again to culture rather than individual failure as the target of Gissing's critique. While seldom explicitly critical of her cultural environment, Miss Lord exhibits a mix of observation and suspension of judgment and affect that contrast both the narrator's critical awareness and the Peachey sisters' avid cultural consumption. In an exemplary passage, Nancy rides the omnibus to the Jubilee celebrations; trying to avoid the conversation of parentally-appointed and long-winded chaperone Samuel Barmby, she reads the advertisements along the top of the vehicle: "Somebody's 'Blue;' somebody's 'Soap;' somebody's 'High-class Jams;' and behold, inserted between the Soap and the Jam—'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoso believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Nancy perused the passage without perception of incongruity, without emotion of any kind" (*IYJ*, 60-61). We are disappointed if we expect to find in Nancy

a more alert and discerning reader than her female contemporaries. Rather, she attends to the advertisements in such a way that their content can only be imperfectly narrated, and this lazy attention doubles as tactical inattention to her prospective suitor Barmby. She is not of a mind with the all-too-attentive narrator, whose distaste for the juxtaposition of the commercial and the sacred is evident both in his hyperbole ("and behold") and in his subsequent observation of Nancy's emotionless and uncritical perusal.

Such observations infuse this scene of reading with the narrator's frustration and cultural anxiety. Still, we find something redeeming about Miss Lord and her negligence, as well as something that transcends Gissing's own dour attitude toward his historical moment: unlike the scene set in the Peachey household, this scene of reading features neither avid consumption nor passive reception. Rather than display reading as a means of escaping boredom, it shows boredom to be the mode in which reading takes place. What are the ramifications for Gissing of the latter sort of reading? To answer this question, we must first note that the two responses recorded in the passage – Nancy's negligent gaze and the critical gaze of the narrator – are not the gazes that the cultural environment wants. While the advertisements wish to sell products and save souls, their incongruous relationship to each other, and their presence as background to an awkward social situation, prevent them from doing either. The narrator notices what Nancy does not – namely, the mutual contradiction of the messages: the eternal persistence of the soul versus the paradigmatically ephemeral announcement of "somebody's something-or-other." The tension created by this juxtaposition parallels that presented in Barmby, who, as the suitor preferred by Nancy's father, represents the customary path forward for a young unmarried woman as well as a reminder of her reluctance at its prospect. And yet, Nancy's inattention demonstrates the possibility of living alongside these tensions while suspending their claims. In a situation such as Nancy's, inattention becomes a resourceful ambivalence rather than (or in addition to) a sign of passivity, receptivity, and manipulability. While culture demands that we "move through" its forms in order to be legible as active participants, inattention ignores their presence. Nancy's inattention works to preservative effect, successfully suspending the claims of suitor, advertiser, and proselytiser alike, thus granting herself a needful measure of quiet in a public space. In addition, this scene of reading contains a counter-narrative to that which positions woman as consummate consumer, and to that which presumes her highest goals in life to be marriage and family. Despite the narrator's irritability, Nancy's inattention shows a measured because negligent response to societal and cultural hubbub, and a more robust response than the despair-inflected boredom of *New Grub Street*'s Edwin Reardon.

In other instances, however, inattention or distraction signal greater consideration of contemporary culture and its implications. Such states are central to the protagonists of Gissing's novels of the middle class, and so the author introduces Miss Lord in one:

> This afternoon–it was Monday–she could not occupy or amuse herself in any of the familiar ways. Perhaps the atmosphere of national Jubilee had a disturbing effect upon her,–in spite of her professed disregard for the gathering tumult of popular enthusiasm. She had not left home to-day, and the brilliant weather did not tempt her forth. On the table lay a new volume from the circulating library,–something about Evolution,–but she had no mind to read it; it would have made her too conscious of the insincerity with which she approached such profound subjects. For a quarter of an hour and more she had stood at the window, regarding a prospect, now as always, utterly wearisome and depressing to her. (*IYJ*, 12-13)

In contrast to the passage cited previously, Nancy's inattention is neither strategic nor performed in relation to another actor's moves; however, it does foreground her particular socio-economic situation. Like the Peacheys, Nancy fosters cultural pretensions that she in fact has "no mind" for. But unlike the Peacheys, her lack of ability is a source of concern for Nancy, a fact signalled by the object of her gaze – the depressing "prospect" of Camberwell, a dreary south London suburb and the place where, regrettably, she has spent most of her life. Between longing for the raucous Jubilee and aiming for self-improvement, wanting to stay indoors and weariness of place, Nancy complements the incongruity of this "bit of London which does not keep pace with the times" with her own ambivalence (*IYJ*, 13).

Nancy's gaze upon dreary prospects seems to put off the change suggested by the topic of her neglected book – "something about Evolution," the narrator tells us through the haze of her inattention. Whereas the Peacheys throw themselves into the social and economic transformations brought on by Arthur's unmerited promotion, Nancy Lord is troubled by her own insincerity and inauthenticity should she pursue similar changes. Looking out at her bleak native environs, she longs for an advance in status and cultural mobility: indeed, this is what all of *Jubilee*'s characters are after in their various ways. However, the idea of transcending her environs gives her pause. In this scene of (not) reading, significantly, the protagonist is marked by her hesitation at the threshold of advancement and change. It is in the pause – one that both postpones and brings on the plot – that Nancy is distinguished as the character closest to Gissing's sympathy, or as having the greatest potential for achieving it. Like her neglect of the omnibus advertisements, the pause shows Nancy to be not quite melded to her cultural milieu.

We might be tempted to ignore these aspects of Nancy's, however, when confronted with sentences infused with notions of women's inherent irrationality

– sentences like, "[Nancy] looked up, and commanded her features to the expression which makes whatever woman lovely—that of rational acquiescence. On the faces of most women such look is never seen" (*IYJ*, 413). It is certainly galling to entertain the idea that a woman's "loveliness" depends on the extent to which she seconds her (male) companion's statements, and more galling still that this remark precedes such unreflective male-centric observations of the relations between the sexes as, "Infidelity in a woman is much worse than in a man," and "True, I am your superior in force of mind and force of body. Don't you like to hear that? Doesn't it do you good—when you think of the maudlin humbug generally talked by men to women?" (*IYJ*, 414). Pushing past disagreeable, irksome, and often misogynistic narration and character positions is and should be recognised as crucial to the project of Gissing studies. Gissing is often hard to like – particularly when the narrator betrays Gissing's own limitations. It is necessary, then, to countenance the unlikeable and the irritating from the beginning, and, rather than dismiss these features as evidence of Gissing's artistic weakness or blatant snobbery, find to what more meaningful and recuperative insights they might point.

Gissing's novels, as Peter Brooks points out, are those of "middling experience," encompassing the rather unremarkable and often tedious lives of the majority of city-dwellers (Brooks, 142).[3] In *In the Year of Jubilee*, the narrator's irritation with Nancy is directed at the middling character of her experience, but it is also the way in which her experience does not quite align with the middle that makes her important, as well as the fact that this margin of misalignment is slim. Nancy is not so very different from the people among her acquaintance, but she is different nonetheless. Her difference first manifests as a certain slackness of attention, a giving of herself over to her boredom – in brief, it manifests as nothing terribly remarkable, or nothing that, on the surface, is radically different from the Peacheys' own use of their leisure time. In contrast, however, Nancy's suspensions of engagement with others or the plot's subtly present demands (that she vow to overcome her circumstances, that she entertain Barmby as a suitor) change during the course of the novel into desires that can be articulated, acted upon, and even inscribed into her own novel, significantly distinguishing Nancy from her cohort as a producer and not merely as a consumer.

Nancy's independence saves her from loss of self to cultural ephemera, to a lousy marriage partner, to various orthodoxies, and to the pursuit of status. Her penchant for boredom, the subject of so much narrational censure, nevertheless positions her beside and apart from the common fray. From the opening page, her boredom renders her more central to the novel – which is to say, more interesting – than those characters whose interests are pronounced, zealous, and

shallow. Nancy's disinterest discloses her potential in her growing ability to consider all things and to be permeated by none, and to remain autonomous, flexible, and thoughtful. She occupies a removed and stable point from which to observe and understand other characters and the world's goings-on. Thus is she able to make, as Woolf attributes to Gissing's characters, "a reasoned view of life" (Woolf).

As we see in Edwin Reardon and Nancy Lord, a reasoned view of life entails distance from commercial demands, growing ever louder and more insistent with the close of the nineteenth century. Gissing's approach to fiction – his focus on affect and depiction of the mundanity of urban life – enacted this distance as well. The idea that fiction writing could be separate from the commercial was gaining ground among literary elites. In 1882, in an essay on Henry James, the playfully designated "Dean of American Letters," William Dean Howells, wrote that James' success in periodicals was due chiefly to a discerning magazine staff. "But with the readers," Howells writes, "it was another affair. The flavor was so strange that, with rare exceptions, they had to 'learn to like' it." Even when readers did genuinely like it, as was the case with "Daisy Miller," their acceptance was facilitated "through the confusion of his point of view with his private opinion" (Howells). Readers "accepted" James when they mistakenly believed the narration's portrayal of characters to coincide perfectly with the author's own estimation of character conduct and condition. It was shocking that the subject of such careful and delicate portraiture should also be the subject of an author's scorn, evidenced in Daisy's death by "Roman fever" after imprudently accompanying an Italian acquaintance to the Colosseum. Like Daisy Miller, James was guilty of infidelity to custom, except that, in James' instance, the custom was literary. Readers, continues Howells, "would have liked him better if he had been a worse artist—if he had been a little more confidential," if he had been, like Dickens and Thackeray, careful to provide the direct and guiding narration that readers had come to expect from decades of tradition in British fiction. James' strength and innovation, however, lay in "character-painting" and in "leav[ing] us to our own conjectures in regard to the fate of the people in whom he has interested us" (Howells). Howell's support of James sparked a critical backlash in Great Britain[4] as conservative critics rallied to defend the Victorian novel. As Mark Spilka summarises in his exploration of the "'Art of Fiction' Controversy," Howell's essay identified James' innovations in fiction as "eschewing incident, or story, for the analysis of character; as eschewing commentary and the sympathetic depiction of character for impartial presentation; and as favoring open endings over closed ones" (Spilka, 110). To demand otherwise, that an author maintain the handholding that disallowed the

use of ambiguity or distance for artistic effect, amounted to childishness. British literature had passed into a decidedly more mature phase.

Citing Ian Gregor's study, *The Moral and the Story*, Mark Spilka states that, whereas successful mid-nineteenth-century novelists "shared conventions with their readers and found techniques to convey them, [...] modern novelists have had to invent techniques so as to create conventions for their readers: 'For the former the problem was to keep an audience; for the latter it is to find one'" (Spilka, 118). That a writer's literary significance and innovation would not coincide with popularity was a new and, as Allon White suggests, disturbing trend. In his work on George Meredith, Joseph Conrad, and Henry James, White argues that all three writers' careers were troubled by the notion that they were "too intellectual to be popular" with an increasingly divided reading public: "This is no novelty to us, for whom the divorce between a mass culture and high culture is a familiar lament, but at the end of the nineteenth century, with the examples of George Eliot and Dickens so close to memory, it was a puzzling and sometimes distressing phenomenon" (White, 32). The discerning magazine staff who selected the work of "modern" novelists for publication, as well as these works' laudatory reviewers, often attributed lack of popularity to the public's faulty taste. But public taste, as Howells seems to suggest in his article on James, is nurtured – and sometimes dulled – by convention. If readers found James' fiction to have a "strange flavor," it was because they had never tasted such a thing before.

Certainly, the venues available for the publication of fiction in Britain accounted for at least some of the narrowness of the reading public's tastes. The circulating libraries, and in particular Mudie's Select Library, demanded the triple-decker novel form which it bought in bulk from publishers from the 1840s until 1897. Mudie's and other circulating libraries profited from the sale of subscriptions to its collection, as well as from the resale of books some months after their initial publication and release. While the libraries occasionally targeted novels for banishment from their collections, the threat of unsold books proved a more effective means of censorship, influencing publishers' decisions about what to publish and authors' decisions about what and how to write.

Especially since it was the libraries – and not the publishers or authors – that were blamed for the occasional scandalous novel in the hands of the public, it was in the former's interest to keep "authors, readers and publishers tied into an extremely stable and predictable structure of expectation about novels and novel-reading from the 1840s to the 1880s" (White, 31). Writers who wanted to retain their public (and their income) in the mid- to late-Victorian periods thus had to offer something new while respecting convention and propriety, which meant observing Mudie's and other libraries' "select"

criteria, pleasing readers with surprise plot twists, and avoiding the construction of, as Wilkie Collins put it in an 1872 article for *The Gentleman's Magazine*, "a tissue of absurdity and contradiction, involving such an obvious inconsistency as hardly to entitle it to a passing allusion" (Collins, 391). Little had changed in over a decade when Alexander Innes Shand described the thin and contradictory line the writer walked when trying to court his public: "His reputation may stand the strain of an occasional feeble story, but he dare not take a succession of liberties or make a series of mistakes. He must have a certain versatility, for the public is capricious" (Shand, 29). Readers, it was thought, would suffer a mediocre author before an experimental one.

Implicit in these writers' critical comments is the lament that catering to both audience demand and the venues that supply it detracts the most from the novel's literary status, not to mention the status of the novelist. It followed that, in order for novels to be regarded as literature, the distance between a work and its audience had to be widened. While most authors could not afford to completely disregard the consumers of their fiction, the sense that readers needed to pull themselves up to the serious writer's level was gaining ground – whether the idea was couched in terms of a collective cultural effort, culture being defined by Matthew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* as the "pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know [...] the best which has been thought and said in the world" (Arnold, 5); or framed as a demand that the philistines (also an Arnoldian term) be made to suffer through what is good for them (Q. D. Leavis[5]); or an insistence that readers learn to like what at first appears strange (Howells). By the turn of the century, literature was no longer primarily held to be a matter of instruction, delight, or even escape, but, as Howells points out, "it is the pursuit and not the end which should give us pleasure," and the dominant artistic rather than moral purpose – there was room, then, for the designedly dull and blatantly boring writing of George Gissing (Howells).

Indeed, many of Howells' appraisals of James can be applied to Gissing, whose major and later novels were likewise more exploration than statement, and who took up moral issues without resolving them, whilst favouring character portraiture and mood over event and place. However, aside from a lengthy and robust critical study of Dickens published in 1898, and prefaces to reprinted editions of Dickens' novels,[6] Gissing wrote very little literary criticism or commentary on the state of literature: indeed, the only anthology of his writing on fiction, *George Gissing on Fiction*, consists primarily of excerpts from his letters to his brother and aspiring novelist Algernon rather than critical articles. In one letter to Algernon, he shows his preference for the methods of narration used by the French naturalists, advising that his latest book should "deal rather

with things that happen than things that are plotted"[7]; in a later letter, Gissing more explicitly advocates impartial narrative technique: "[T]he less you think about analysis, the better and more acceptable work will you do. Let the reader analyse character and motive, if he be capable of it; do you simply present facts, events, dialogue, scenery. The rest will surprise you [...]" (*Gissing on Fiction*, 57, 63).[8] Of the novels of Thomas Hardy, Gissing observes, "The people are always busy about something or other—often wretched trivialities, but it is astonishing how much interest can attach to the paltriest affairs if only they be vividly presented" (Ibid, 63).[9] Given that "happenings," lack of character analysis, and "wretched" albeit vividly portrayed trivialities would fail to attract a wide readership, his suggestion that these more subtle representations make for "better and more acceptable work" speaks to his sturdy belief that the nation's literary woes could only be alleviated by the writers themselves. Only a supply of high-quality, intelligent (and perhaps even dull) fiction will nurture reader's demand for it.

The critical pieces Gissing did publish demonstrate his forward-looking attitude regarding the possibilities open to literary representation, as well as his conviction that the further a writer is removed from commercial concerns, the better his art will be. Like James' succinct declaration in "The Art of Fiction" that "the only obligation to which in advance we may hold a novel [...] is that it be interesting," Gissing's qualifications for fiction are few, suggesting his equal openness to variety of technique and content.[10] In an 1895 piece, "The Place of Realism in Fiction," written for a symposium on Realism in *The Humanitarian*, Gissing states that "art, in the sense of craftsman's skill, without sincerity of vision will not suffice [...]. It seems to me that no novel can possess the slightest value which has not been conceived, fashioned, elaborated, with a view to depicting some portion of human life as candidly and vividly as is in the author's power" (*Gissing on Fiction*, 84-85). Even Charles Dickens, whose fiction many critics in Gissing's day – including occasionally Gissing himself – began to view as antiquated, overly stylised, and parochial in his social and moral intentions, had sincerity of purpose and vision for Gissing: writing in an age when "the English character seemed bent on exhibiting all its grossest and meanest and most stupid characteristics," Dickens did not compose characters that were "mere forms of fantasy" but accurately recorded the peculiarities and outlandish individualism of an otherwise "ill-defined order of English folk" (*Charles Dickens*, 9, 12). Had his characterisations not been truthful, Gissing argues, they would not have persisted in the popular imagination. Where authors err in realistic representation is in deforming their art to order. Dickens' major flaw as a writer was not his courting of middle-class sensibilities, as Gissing saw it, but his affinity for popular narrative forms, and plays in particular.

Dickens "planned a narrative as though plotting for the stage. When the necessities of intrigue did not weigh upon him—as happily was so often the case in his roomy stories—he could forget the footlights; at the first demand for an 'effect,' gas and limelight are both turned on. Cannot we often hear the incidental music?" (Ibid, 47-48). Dickens, we might say, was not boring enough, the pathetic mode of narration demanded by popular theatre overriding the well-wrought story and characters drawn from life.

As we might assume from his emphasis on truthfulness of representation, Gissing's literary and critical interests belonged to Realism; furthermore, Gissing opposes Realism, not to Romance or Symbolism as did many of the literary conversations at the time, but to the commercial. Here he concludes "The Place of Realism in Fiction" with a broad conception of Realism's purpose:

> Realism [...] signifies nothing more than artistic sincerity in the portrayal of contemporary life; it merely contrasts with the habit of mind which assumes that a novel is written 'to please people,' that disagreeable facts must always be kept out of sight, that human nature must be systematically flattered, that the book must have a 'plot,' that the story should end on a cheerful note, and all the rest of it. (85-86)

Gissing considered it possible for the late-19th-century artist to be free of mercenary concerns, stating that, in contrast to Dickens' day, "public opinion no longer constrains a novelist to be false to himself. The world lies open before him, and it is purely a matter for his private decision whether he will write as the old law dictates or to show life its image as he beholds it" (*Gissing on Fiction*, 86). In his own practice, Gissing bravely dismissed the question of popular appeal, as his occasional lack of business acumen[11] and his subject matter often dictated that he work on the edge of poverty. For better or worse, Gissing worked in defiance of public opinion by taking an anti-commercial stance in and with his art.

Realism was, for Gissing, the artist's best hope for artistic freedom. His understanding of realism as a non-commercial mode[12] positioned Gissing to record what psychoanalyst Adam Phillips refers to as the more "quiescent," less spectacular states – particularly boredom – of middle-class life. As Gissing's career progressed, his novels had less recourse to the conventional mechanisms that relieve deserving characters of their economic and social concerns. Instead, he represented these concerns obsessively, and, as Robert Shafer writes, "with a small canvas, with not many colours—and those not the most striking or vivid—with a blunt pencil which sometimes failed to do his bidding, and with an eye which saw truly only a few kinds of people, and which saw during the greater part of his career predominantly the more grim and misery-provoking aspects of existence" (Michaux, 41). Raymond Williams similarly locates Gissing's significance in his despair, not just over the "true conditions of the poor" chronicled by the high-Victorian masters, but "another

kind of despair: the despair born of social and political disillusion" endemic to the years between the Victorian and the contemporary era.[13] Though Gissing's representations may be limited to the emotional and financial struggles he himself experienced, his lack of range strengthens the overall sense of loss – both personal and cultural – that sets his oeuvre apart, as Henry James observed, as clinging, virile, and strangely contagious. If his fiction is remarkable, it is not because it bears resemblance to his own life, but because this resemblance is the core of his approach to realism. Gissing's novels provide tedious representations of tedious life under capitalism. His Nancy Lord and Edwin Reardon similarly take up attitudes of refusal in response to modern life, finding what is personally important through boredom and reflection, developing their own points of view in relation to the great, grey urban scene.

Rather than conduct the grand tour of society for a large and loving audience in the style of his Victorian predecessors, Gissing offers merely his point of view. Though he undoubtedly lived the deprivations and consternations about which he wrote, he was, more importantly, a writer who saw and represented a world increasingly opposed to sustained attention, interest, and interaction. In this way, Gissing distinguishes himself, not only as a novelist, but as an urgently needed cultural critic, both of his day and of days to come.

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[1] Experimental, but not, as in the case of Zola's 'Experimental Novel,' based solely or primarily on documentation and objective observation.

[2] Indeed, he would have found the concept to be oxymoronic.

[3] Contrast Gissing's depictions of unremarkable protagonists with Eliot's Dorothea in *Middlemarch*, whose "full nature […] spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth" but whose effect on others "was incalculably diffusive, for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts, and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life and rest in unvisited tombs" (p. 785).

[4] Howells' essay was first published in *Longman's Magazine*, a London monthly. There was little fervour at this time for critical literary discussion in the States, much to Henry

James' and others' dismay. See Spilka, "Henry James and Walter Besant: 'The Art of Fiction' Controversy" in *NOVEL*, 6:2 (Winter, 1973): pp. 101-119.

[5] Q. D. Leavis highlights this point in her important though occasionally acid study, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932), in which she charts the long decline of the English reading public since the eighteenth century. Leavis argues that nineteenth- and twentieth-century readers, so much more numerous and less sharp than in centuries prior, had never been asked to develop their palettes, being instead "accustomed for two centuries to have the writer smooth the way for us. For the next thing that one notices is how much less was done for the common reader by the Elizabethan popular writer or dramatist than by the modern popular author or journalist" (*Leavis*, pp. 86-87). We will leave Leavis' ahistorical concept of the "popular" aside to emphasise her point that the Modernist Virginia Woolf has more in common with the eighteenth-century novelist Laurence Sterne than she does with one of her best-selling contemporaries, as neither Woolf nor Sterne pandered to reader expectations or emotions (*Leavis*, p. 235). But while Sterne had a ready homogeneous readership ("[he] wrote for the best, because it was the only, public" in *Leavis*, p. 157), Woolf could only hope to attract an audience to her style and particular set of concerns.

[6] Collected in *The Immortal Dickens*.

[7] 3 August 1889.

[8] 25 July 1891.

[9] Jacob Korg points out that Gissing later contradicts his advice to Algernon, urging him to "deliberately construct what is called a plot" when he saw that Algernon had little knack for writing the "simply human situations" he had earlier advocated (*George Gissing on Fiction*, pp. 73-74).

[10] Contrast James' and Gissing's brevity and lack of rules for writing with the long-winded, self-contradictory, and limiting rules of fiction composition put forward by Walter Besant in his own lecture titled "The Art of Fiction," delivered at the Royal Institution in April 1884.

[11] Jacob Korg reports that, in the first six years of Gissing's literary travails (in which he wrote five novels and published four), he made a total profit of £57 (*George Gissing on Fiction*, p. 39). After an unsuccessful attempt to collect royalties from the badly-selling *Thyrza* (1887), Gissing continued to sell his work outright to publishers, earning a one-time payment of £150 for *New Grub Street* and thus "ignoring not only the financial potential but even the message of his own book" (Keating, *Haunted Study*, p. 18). Facing hardship, Gissing hired a literary agent in order to place *Born in Exile* (1892) and in 1894 joined the Society of Authors, a proto-union for writers founded by Walter Besant (*George Gissing on Fiction*, pp. 74, 77). However, Gissing's reputation and income rose steadily, and he was soon able to demand £300 for a novel after committing himself to writing short stories for the periodical press from 1892 (my thanks to Markus Neacey for this qualification).

[12] Certainly, Gissing was not the sole novelist to take this position: scholars like Ian Watt and Terry Lovell have observed that novelists of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries wished to garner artistic seriousness for their work through verisimility and truth claims. By writing the "true story" of individual lives, authors like Fielding and Defoe hoped to distinguish their work from commercial entertainment. As Lovell writes, this "desire for respectability may therefore have been a powerful determinant of the emergence of conventions of realism in the early novel" (Lovell, p. 7).

[13] Which, in 1958, Williams designated as post-World War I.

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End of a Wild-Goose Chase: James Paterson's Biography of George Gissing

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The first time I learned of a man called James Paterson was through an article by Heather R. Munro in *The Gissing Journal*[1] about a collection of photographs taken in London of buildings associated with Gissing's works and of houses in which he had lived. Paterson had probably commissioned these pictures in November 1941 from the firm of Bedford Lemere & Co because he intended to use (some of) them in order to illustrate a biography of Gissing he had been planning since the late 1920s.

Miss Munro in her article admitted that "[a]t this time James Paterson's background is unknown, it cannot be determined whether he [is] an author, an historian or simply someone with an interest in Gissing." That Paterson was seriously engaged in researching Gissing's life with a view to publishing his biography he had made clear in at least two letters to the editor of the *TLS*,[2] but despite the statement in the second letter that he was about to "finally complete his book," it proved impossible for me to ascertain that such a study had been published.

Less than two years after Heather Munro's article alerted me to Paterson, I was awarded a generous grant from the Ball Brothers Foundation to undertake research during the month of February 1993 in the Lilly Library at Indiana University in Bloomington to prepare a critical edition of Gissing's *Scrapbook*. And on arriving for my first visit to the Library I was delighted to be welcomed by Heather Munro, manuscripts reference assistant to Librarian William R. Cagle.

In May 1992 the Library had acquired the celebrated Pforzheimer collection including "a vast 'scrapbook' of printed and holograph source matter," which was to be the major focus of my research efforts for that month. But I remember that Miss Munro and I spent a long and happy morning examining Paterson's sublime pictures and wondering where and when they might have ended up between the covers of his book.

I do not think it is an exaggeration to claim that there and then under the august roof of the Lilly I vowed to make it my business to identify James Paterson and his elusive Gissing biography. Though I did manage to identify the man in 2000 with the help of Jack Davis, Departmental Librarian in the History and Glasgow Room of the Cultural and Leisure Services of the Glasgow City Council, Paterson's book eluded me until the latest *Gissing Journal* contained the news that on 19 February of this year at Lyon & Turnbull in Edinburgh Paterson's collection of manuscript papers relating to George Gissing was sold

by auction for £162. It would seem therefore that my wild-goose chase ended in Edinburgh twenty-seven years after I started it in Bloomington.

One of two questions arising out of the description of the material by the auctioneers is if Paterson's collection was indeed intended for gaining a Ph.D. rather than a life of Gissing. The second is the question to end all questions: who was the successful buyer?

Finally, to solve the mystery of Paterson's identity, allow me to pass on the details of his life I have retrieved. I am sure George Gissing would have approved the lifelong interest of a fellow classicist.

James Paterson (1895-1968)

James Paterson, born on 3 May 1895, in the parish of Johnstone, county Dumfries, Scotland, an illegitimate son of Elizabeth Paterson, a domestic at Kimmel Hall, Johnstone. He died on 17 February 1968, in Glasgow.

The Glasgow Herald published the following obituary:

Mr James Paterson, former headmaster of Hillhead High School, Glasgow, died on Saturday, at his home in Beechwood Drive, Glasgow. He was 71.

Born in Dumfriesshire, he was educated at Lockerbie and Dumfries academies before going to Glasgow University, where he was first bursar in 1916. Later that year he joined the army as an officer with the King's Own Scottish Borderers until he was wounded.

Returning to the university, he graduated with first class Honours in Classics in 1918. His first teaching post was as assistant at Dalziel High School, and then he returned to lecture in Greek at the university before becoming principal teacher of classics at Glasgow High School in 1930.

His first headmastership was at Adelphi Terrace Junior Secondary School, Glasgow, and he then held the position at Eastbank Academy, Shettleston, before moving to Hillhead in 1946. He was headmaster at Hillhead until his retirement in 1959.

Mr Paterson was a well-known author of school text-books and co-author with Mr Edwin G. Macnaughton, of Hamilton, of the "Approach to Latin" series, and he also edited a volume in Bell's "Alpha Classics."

He was a member of the council of the Head Masters' Association of Scotland for several years and also served as convener of several university committees. Mr Paterson was an elder of Broomhill Church of Scotland. On the occasion of his move in 1946 from Glasgow High School to a headmastership of Adelphi Terrace School the Rector of his former school published the following farewell tribute to Mr Paterson in the school's magazine:

MR PATERSON
AN APPRECIATION BY THE RECTOR

It is one of the weaknesses of our present-day educational system that when a promotion of a teacher is in question, the emphasis is laid on the last two syllables of the word, and the teacher is usually moved from a sphere in which he has achieved outstanding success, to begin a life afresh in an unfamiliar world. No doubt it is all to the advantage of other schools to be enriched by the skill, outlook and experience of men who have proved themselves. Vision, broad sympathy and real regard for the ultimate ends of education are qualities too valuable and too rare to be monopolised by any one school. Yet when promotion comes to one of our number we greet it with an auspicious and a dropping eye; there is a certain hollowness in our congratulations; we felicitate the recipient of favour, but we are deeply conscious of our own loss.

Of all the distinguished men who have been identified with the High School, none have struck their roots more deeply into its soil, and none have contributed more to its vitality than James Paterson. As a teacher of the Classics, his inspiration has helped to mould many generations of High School boys, and to produce not only scholars, but also balanced men of the world. As Head of his Department, he has welded together a team of earnest and willing workers who regard him with admiration and affection. As Deputy Rector of the School, he has recently been called upon to shoulder the whole burden of its administration, a task he has accomplished with tact, firmness and discretion. His shrewd kindliness and his pawky humour have endeared him to all, teachers, pupils, parents, and to none more than to the writer of this note who is proud to call him friend.

There was a time when the position of Head of a Department in the High School conferred status and emoluments equal to those of Headmastership of a Secondary School. In those days the uprooting of the choicest plants of the garden was not a catastrophe to be dreaded. Times have changed, however, and since the outstanding merits of distinguished teachers can be recognised only by their transplanting to other plots, we approve the choice of Mr Paterson as Headmaster of Adelphi Terrace School. Knowing that he will bring to that office the same alertness of mind, organising skill, breadth of sympathy and honesty of purpose that have marked his tenure of office in the High School.

A FURTHER TRIBUTE

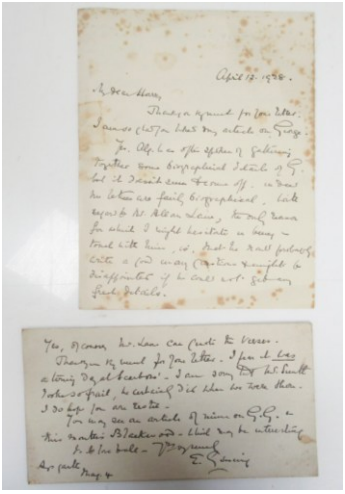
Thomas Carlyle, too, was a Dumfriesshire-man, and of him it has been well said that “he made an eternal memorial for himself in the hearts of all to whom truth is the dearest of possessions.” The words might have been

written of James Paterson: for sixteen years we have never ceased to marvel at his unassailable integrity.

Classical Dux of Dumfries Academy and 1st in the Open Bursary Competition, Mr Paterson had a brilliant career at Fillmore. One could fill a page with his academic distinctions. He graduated M.A. in 1923 with first-class Honours in Classics, trained at Jordanhill, taught for three years in Dalziel High School, Motherwell, and lectured for two years in the Greek Department of Glasgow University.

A scholar, then? Scholar and soldier too, for he had served with the 2nd and 6th King's Own Scottish Borderers, and had been wounded at Ypres in September 1917, admirable *dictum*, on the self-same day as Dr Cowen. He *has* been known to play golf with reckless abandon, and even to remove from the fairway an ailing teg, lest privily it ail a bit more; but he takes far keener pleasure in his garden, in his books, and in his pipe.

His drive and energy, his enthusiasm for his twin subjects, his wide reading, his thorough drilling in the fundamentals, his lucid and logical way with difficulties, are calculated to lead even the lamest dog to an appreciation of the golden sentence of Isocrates. His text-books are a marvel of perspicuity. His exceptional powers of organisation, and his fine command of words have been much in evidence during the Rector's lamented illness and have brought our vessel safe to port. And now our Society upon the Stanislow is about to break up, and our Truthful James to leave us. Some day–who knows–we may encounter him on the Wall at Housesteads and glimpse again that quick, bird-like turn of the head as he stands and waits our watchword.



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APPENDICES

To whet the appetite of potential buyers Lyon & Turnbull advertised the auction of the Paterson material with two illustrations which to insiders clearly provide direct evidence of associates of Gissing.

I. Ellen Gissing to Harry [= Henry Hick]

April 12, 1928.

My dear Harry,

Thank you very much for your letter. I am so glad you liked my article on George.[3] Yes, Alg. has often spoken of gathering together some

biographical details of G. but it doesn't seem to come off – indeed the letters are fairly biographical. With regard to Mr. Allen Lane,[4] the only reason for which I might hesitate in being in touch with him, is, that he should probably write a good many questions & might be disappointed if he could not get any fresh details.

II. [Ellen Gissing to Alfred Gissing]

Yes, of course, Mr. Lane can quote the verses. Thank you very much for your letter. I fear it <u>was</u> a tiring day at Scarboro'. I am sorry that Mr. South looks so frail, he certainly did when we were there. I do hope you are rested.

You may see an article of mine on G. G. in this month's Blackwood[5] – which may be interesting.

& so love to all - Yrs. very sincerely,

E. Gissing

Aysgarth
May 4, [1929]

(© Lyon & Turnbull Auctioneers, 2020)

I.

England 17 June 1933

Dear Mr. Lane,

I hope I am not troubling you greatly, but I am venturing to ask you whether you could give me the exact date of the special number of *Literature* in which my father's article, "Dickens in Memory,"[6] appeared. Dr. Hick knew this date + I believe you gave it him originally in a list of other writings.

Unfortunately I only know of the American periodical[7] in which the article appeared + this will not be so easy to procure as *Literature*. My friends recollect the article, but not the date of its publication, + I cannot at the moment go to the British Museum to search for it. It would be exceedingly kind of you if […]

II. Addressed envelope:

Allen Lane Esq. In blue pencil: Alfred Gissing
801 F Street
Sacramento
California
USA

III. Unfortunately, the text of the letter addressed to "My dear Harry" [=Henry Hick], is partially covered by the two other items (I and II). However, some of the issues raised may be inferred from the portions that can be read:

Yore View,
Aysgarth,
Yorks.

August 9th, 1927

Thank you so much for the Catalogue.[8] I am […] perplexed, as I think you said you gained £44 by […] transaction. Does it mean Sotheby gains all […] as I see their sums would come to very much m[ore] […] Let me know the solution of this sometime [on a postcard].

To think of your staying with Fanny [… it seems] to me years and years her […] very well. I expect that you yourself put […] [The Private Life of Henry] Maitland. I fear anything of Morley [Roberts] […] disregard. He is a man that one c[an only have] distaste for. It is sad that it […] to Gertrude[9] if she […] glad to hear it [...]

[Yours] sincerely,
[Elle]n Gissi[ng]

[1] Heather R. Munro, "Photographs of Gissing's London: The Paterson Collection at the Lilly Library," *Gissing Journal*, 27:3 (July 1991), pp. 24-29.

[2] GEORGE GISSING

Sir, — May I appeal through your columns for information about George Gissing's schooldays from anyone who knew him at [Harrison's Back Lane School] Wakefield, or at Lindow Grove School, Alderley Edge, Cheshire?

Yours faithfully,
JAMES PATERSON.

Care of Smith, 17, Cherry Hill View, Larkhall, Lanarkshire, Scotland.

Printed in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 18 April 1935, p. 257.

GEORGE GISSING

Sir, — I am engaged on research into the life of George Gissing, and before finally completing my book would like to appeal to your readers for permission to see, and perhaps use, any letters they may have, written by Gissing. Any such letters sent to me will be taken great care of, and returned as soon as possible.

JAMES PATERSON.

Care of Miss Clayson, 60, New Oxford Street, W.C.1.

Printed in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 October 1946, p. 507.

[3] This is probably a reference to Alfred Gissing's "Preface" to *Letters of George Gissing to Members of His Family* (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1927), pp. v-vi.

[4] On the death of his uncle, John Lane (1854-1925), Allen Lane (1902-1970) became the managing director of Bodley Head, the London publishers. In 1896 the firm had set up a New York Office, at 140 Fifth Avenue, New York, USA.

[5] Ellen Gissing, "Some Personal Recollections of George Gissing," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1929.

[6] George Gissing, "Dickens in Memory: A Personal View," *Literature*, 21 December 1901, pp. 572-575.

[7] *Critic*, New York, January 1902, pp. 47-51.

[8] See: *Henry Hick's Recollections of George Gissing, together with Gissing's Letters to Henry Hick*, edited and introduced by Pierre Coustillas (London: Enitharmon Press, 1973), p. 5: "The dispersal of the letters took place on July 28, 1927 at a time when there was a marked revival of interest in Gissing." The sale took place at Sotheby's in London. […] The bids amounted to a sum of £189 19s. No wonder that Ellen Gissing asks for an explanation why so little of the money paid for the letters ended up in Henry Hick's purse.

[9] Gertrude was one of Henry Hick's sisters. She was born in Wakefield in 1861. Cp. Antony Petyt, "The Gissings' Wakefield Circle: IV – The Hick family," *Gissing Journal*, 43:1 (January 2007), pp. 23-33.

From Hoxton to Holloway: Suburbanising North London in *Demos* and Beyond

JASON FINCH
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1. Introduction: Beyond Clerkenwell

In two earlier articles for *The Gissing Journal* I explored the changing definitions of Lambeth in South London as they emerge in Gissing's varied writings on different portions of it produced particularly in the late 1880s and early 1890s (Finch 2018a; Finch 2018b). Desk research and walks through the present-day London Borough of Lambeth put those writings into dialogue with what can be gathered about Lambeth in historical perspective. In a complex way, Lambeth has become both a local government territory extending well into outer suburbs, and a neighbourhood close to central London. As this fact demonstrates, multiple significations associated with individual urban place names can overlap or even exist distinct from one another. Literary authors frequently manipulate and adapt such complexities, and Gissing was a master of such practices.

Within London during its period of massive population and physical expansion from the seventeenth to mid-twentieth centuries, place names often shifted their coverage or were forgotten. There were also actual legal arguments over who a particular territory belonged to in governmental (as opposed to private property) terms, for example around Chancery Lane in the very centre of London. There, in the period 1760 to 1815, parochial authorities, the Cities of London and Westminster and extra-parochial bodies, notably the Inns of Court, struggled for jurisdiction (Boorman 2013). Between the 1860s and the 1880s, through newspaper journalism, Clerkenwell became synonymous with outdated and supposedly corrupt forms of local government, specifically the parish vestry whose members were an oligarchy of local businessmen (Owen 1982: 172–175). Writing in 1931, Harry Barnes made "The Clerkenwell Comedy" of "houses crammed from cellar to attic" with people exploited by "the farmer of houses" symbolise the rotten housing conditions of Victorian London (Barnes 1931: 180–183). In fact, the scandals which besmirched the name of Clerkenwell between the 1850s and the 1880s were located in multiple parishes: St James's, Clerkenwell and, to its east, the parish of St Luke's, sometimes called 'St Luke's, Clerkenwell' (Ibid., 173). The word 'Clerkenwell' labels a locality of historically varied extent and borders just north of the City of London. As the editors of the 2008 *Survey of London* volumes on Clerkenwell put it, moreover, twenty-first-century views

of a renascent Clerkenwell as "a compact 'urban village' just north of the City" omit "most of the land-area belonging to the historic parish from its twelfth-century beginnings down to 1900" (SoL 46: 3–27). Notably, they omit the northerly zone known as Pentonville which developed as a residential suburb on elevated ground in the early nineteenth century. At the time of Gissing's *Demos*, the overlapping jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Board of Works and the civil parish put in place during the 1850s still applied. Two years after the 1886 publication of *Demos*, the London County Council (LCC) was authorised, then, in 1899, London County was divided into 28 Metropolitan Boroughs, the latter established by Conservative central government as a counterweight to the power of the Council (Porter [1994]: 406). In the process, Clerkenwell and St Luke's lost any formal local government status, both becoming part of the Metropolitan Borough of Finsbury, which was in turn incorporated into the London Borough of Islington in 1965.

Earlier accounts of Gissing and Clerkenwell have focused on *The Nether World*. Andrew Whitehead (2010) has written of this novel that it portrays "Clerkenwell as Hell." As Whitehead (2011) elsewhere points out, Gissing uses the word "Clerkenwell" more than seventy times in the course of *The Nether World*. *Demos*, published three years before *The Nether World*, covers territory physically close to that of the later novel – indeed, the climactic scene that leads to the death of its protagonist Richard Mutimer, a socialist leader, takes place on Clerkenwell Green (Gissing 2011: 439–448; numbers in brackets hereafter refer to this edition). Richard's death, it bears observing, does not actually take place in Clerkenwell but is specified as being in a different local government district never actually named in the novel, St Luke's (446). In the earlier novel, Gissing attempts no aesthetic transformation of that area that would give it a symbolic status. Such a transformation is one Gissing instead achieved three years after the publication of *Demos* in *The Nether World*. The inspiration, it would seem, was the sight of his first wife Nell's corpse – in Lambeth, on 1 March 1888 – following which experience he announced in his diary that he would "never cease to bear testimony against the cursed social order that brings about things of this kind" (Gissing 1978). If *The Nether World* is a novel depicting that "accursed social order" as well as being "Gissing's most sustained study of slum life" (Keating 1979: 83), *Demos* is a political novel. But it is also a much more sophisticated work of literary topography, tracing modes of experiencing a radically expanding London, than has so far been recognised.

Demos contains scenes of political meetings on and around Clerkenwell Green in central or "old" Clerkenwell (a key setting in *The Nether World*) but also numerous accounts of lodgings and housing in neighbourhoods in or

bordering Clerkenwell. These lodging and housing arrangements are, in different ways, impermanent. They are based on rental agreements established quickly and equally liable to abandonment. Examples include the "one room only" taken after an afternoon's search by Emma Vine "in a woeful byway near Old Street" when she discovers that the suddenly wealthy Mutimer has abandoned her (237). And they include the two rooms "at a lodging-house not far from the reservoir at the top of Pentonville Hill" taken by Mutimer for himself and his wife Adela (who is distinguished from him by "[p]erhaps […] three generations" of "gentility") after losing his fortune (Ibid., 350). These neighbourhoods include Old Street, Pentonville, Highbury, Hoxton and a portion of southern Islington just north of the Regent's Canal. Several were in local government districts adjacent to the parish of St James, Clerkenwell: Islington and Shoreditch, for instance. Rather than a strict dichotomy of nether and upper worlds, then, what Gissing presents in *Demos* comes closer to "London's kaleidoscopic reality" in the first half of the twentieth century with its suburbs of varying prosperity at different distances from the centre (White [2001]: 122). *Demos* is subtitled *A Story of English Socialism* and a further place dimension of the novel is the question of whether in it Gissing pillories the specific aspirations of the London working class, or attacks the hypocritical social climbing that for him characterises English manners as a whole.

The historic centre of Clerkenwell is north and south of today's Clerkenwell Road with Clerkenwell Green on one side of it. Clerkenwell grew beside the main northward road out of London (today St John Street) around the precincts of the medieval nunnery of St Mary and, immediately to its south, the Priory of the Order of St John of Jerusalem (SoL 46: 28–37, 115–141, citing Gissing's account of the St John's Square area in *The Nether World*). The area was bounded on the western side by the River Fleet. Between 1840 and 1880, two major roads were built through the area. Farringdon Road now ran north-south down the valley of the Fleet becoming a boundary that could only be crossed via a couple of streets which Gissing labelled a "tract of modern deformity" in *The Nether World* (Gissing 1992: 280). Then, completed in 1878, Clerkenwell Road cut through. This was an east-west connection linking Old Street with Holborn and St Giles – an inner-ring northern bypass of the older congested east-west routes to its south (see Weller [1868]: sheets 30 and 31, showing the route of the new road just before its construction). By the late nineteenth century, Clerkenwell was one of London's main industrial centres, ringing with the sounds of factories and transport related to their work. In 1898, London's larger factories (defined as having over 100 workers) were massively concentrated in the area due north, north-west and west of the City of London (Clout 1991: 93). Clerkenwell in 1939 looked much as it had looked in Gissing's lifetime (Porter

[1994]: 393). And unlike the East End of London or the City, Clerkenwell was relatively untouched by either Second-World-War bombing or twentieth-century slum clearance. After all, some of its most notorious districts had been replaced by model dwellings, the modern mass housing of the era, in Gissing's lifetime, as charted in *The Nether World*. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, its disused warehouses and factories filled with creative industry businesses: advertising agencies; web designers. But the idea of Clerkenwell as a particularly old, inner (or Dickensian) district remains. Indeed, such an idea seems important to the post-1980 reawakening of Clerkenwell, scripted as a long-forgotten yet surviving portion of old London.

But looking beyond Clerkenwell proper to a zone connecting it with Pentonville, Shoreditch, Hoxton and Islington reveals a much more varied and even confusing picture. As with the two earlier articles about Gissing's Lambeth, the method used in preparing this one involves walking. In this case, I took a single walk on a Sunday in October 2019, from the City of London northwards to Wilton Square (N1) a key setting in *Demos*, then back from there crossing the Regent's Canal and City Road to the former St Luke's Church building on Old Street (EC1). On several previous occasions I had walked in old Clerkenwell, around Clerkenwell Green, St James's Church and the remnants of the medieval Priory of St John south of Clerkenwell Road, and in the ancient streets connecting that village nucleus to Smithfield. On that October day I ignored this more obviously historic and distinguished area. Walking is an act of fieldwork long overlooked by literary scholars as a specific research method but now included in the methodologies of cultural geographers and urban historians: it brings about an appreciation of how our bodies relate to the physical world and how words themselves are embodied (Ameel et al. 2020: 13; Ward 2014: 761–762). Gissing himself walked London neighbourhoods before writing about them. By including walked fieldwork in the methodology, Gissing's "art of writing place" can be better appreciated (Ward 2014).

2. Ways of Viewing City Zones: Micro and Macro; Integrated and Dispersed

The present essay works to pinpoint sites named in *Demos*, reading the novel as a portrait of 'English socialism' based on a variegated sector of the metropolis with its own inner and outer zones, wealthier districts and slums. Scholarly accounts of how a particular city is represented in a particular novel sometimes use a single extended passage from the novel as the basis for an overall interpretation, even of the writer's attitude as a whole. Jeremy Tambling (2009: 268; cf. Finch 2019a: 177–180), for example, contrasts Dickens's walkable city with the more dispersed, geographically larger metropolis observed by Gissing via an account of a tram journey northwards from King's

Cross in *Thyrza*. Alternative approaches include the cartographic, in which the multiple city references of a text such as that of one of Gissing's 1880s novels, absolutely brimming with the names of London streets and districts, are mapped and connected with characters' movements. Working together with the Drawing Office of UCL's Geography Department, Richard Dennis (2010a; 2010b; 2013) has produced maps of this sort for *Workers in the Dawn* and *Thyrza*. Some sites in *Demos* appear on a map of "The Other East End" which Dennis created for a 2010 book chapter (Dennis 2010a: 39). I have elsewhere attempted a broader estimation of how the concept of the wider East End is logged in cultural representations over a 150-year span from the 1830s to the 1980s (Finch 2016: 153–172). This region is only mentioned a few times in *Demos*, in the location "in the remote East End" of Manor Park Cemetery, which "gives sleeping places to the inhabitants of a vast district" not far from "the dreary expanse of Wanstead Flats" (233). There, Mutimer buys a burial plot for Emma Vine's sister Jane, whose death is linked to Richard's neglect of Emma. References to the East End in *Demos* cluster in the novel's third and final volume (Dennis 2010a: 41). It is in "the East End" that Richard plans to relaunch himself as a popular orator (398), his reputation in Hoxton and Islington having declined. Emma ends the novel living in an East End suburb on the western, London, side of the River Lea whereas Manor Park and Wanstead lie east of it, formally in Essex in 1886.

As Dennis (2013: 562–563) points out in mapping *Thyrza*, the young Gissing in his 1880s novels would often work with a structural contrast between an intimately local 'world' and a near-global range enjoyed and explored by moneyed characters. The later sort of large-scale mobility is important in Gissing's 1890s accounts of the bourgeois existence, however treacherous and unstable, notably in *The Whirlpool*. *Thyrza* emphasises both the micro-local and the macro-scale of intercontinental travel, the latter carried out by its moneyed, high-minded protagonist Walter Egremont. In contrast, a large-scale section of the world's most populous city is indicated in *Demos*. Glimpses are gained of other London sectors and, in the countryside but dependent on a "region blasted with mine and factory and furnace" some miles off (35), the fictional Wanley. In *Demos*, movement on a global scale is connected with the novel's villain, the crooked financier Willis Rodman.

Gissing's literary assembly of a city image involves a pile-up of toponyms and a sense of many different wealth levels while London, biggest of cities, lacks real qualities of difference within itself, being a mere monument to materialism and forgetfulness of human culture. His urban vision, then, makes the city not a place-world (or self-sustaining spatial environment) complete in itself, but a wrong turning or a parody of what human culture ought to be. In

the year of Gissing's death, by contrast, Georg Simmel pronounced the city something new but essentially complete in itself as a social world, embodying "specifically modern life." Simmel's, not Gissing's, is the vision of the city that afterwards followed different routes in the twentieth-century thinking of Chicago School sociology and, in Europe, of Walter Benjamin (Simmel [1903]: 409). Gissing's city is capacious. It includes areas that lack classically urban qualities, teeming neither with people nor with social variety – dull and repetitive streets of houses, often its comparatively decent areas (57). As Rebecca Hutcheon (2018: 4) notes, the metropolis is far from being the only category of place imagined in Gissing's writing, and may even be overstated in post-1970s Gissing scholarship. This essay reads Gissing's city fiction of the 1880s as part of the process of suburbanisation of London and its surroundings in this era, amounting to a simultaneous expansion and questioning of the field of the urban or, in the terms of Henri Lefebvre ([1970]: 1–22), a shift "from the city to urban society."

Lexical choices and arrangements of literary characters establish the social and mental span of this metropolis. Chapters 3–5 of *Demos* introduce the three Mutimer siblings, Richard and his younger brother and sister, who live with their widowed mother. The Mutimers occupy both physical borders and social ones. They are attracted by wealth and the possibility of ascending in rank, but the threat of poverty still haunts them. The adjective *extreme* and its derivatives appear numerous times in the novel, applied to the Mutimers as well as those socially above and below them. Threats to be "avoided" (368, 385) – of public shame including scandal, or applications for parish assistance – are examples of "extremity." Emma Vine's sister Kate Clay, giving in to alcoholism, displays the signs of "extreme poverty" (387). Richard is drawn to "the 'extreme' school" in his reading matter, "[s]ocial, political, religious" and propounds "extreme politics" (72, 383). Richard's younger brother, when first introduced, dresses "in imitation of extreme fashions" (70). All three of the Mutimer children are border-crossers. It might seem that Gissing is condemning their efforts to leave their social class: indeed, he prepares misfortunes and unpleasant surprises for all three (although Richard's sister Alice, unlike her brothers, is permitted a happy ending). But perhaps they are simply representatives of their time as their parents, comfortable with artisan-class status, were with theirs. Within "a story of English socialism" they are English modernity, a representative trio.

London literary topographies, efforts to write the city, have been produced via more and less theoretical approaches (Dart 2012; Groes 2011; Humpherys 2006; Wolfreys 2004). The time is now ripe for systematic assessments of how London literary topography should be organised. This essay proceeds with a three-part literary topography of suburbanising North London in Gissing's

1880s fiction, focusing on *Demos*. First, several writers' visions of a single area with a fairly rich literary history are reviewed. Then, at the heart of this essay, I investigate the North London toponyms of *Demos*. After that, some topographic sensings of the same zone gained by physical fieldwork and desk research enter the picture.

3. Literary Clerkenwell: Dickens to Hollinghurst

In the mixed zone focused on Clerkenwell he creates in *Demos*, Gissing produces an atypical representation of this particular urban region. The Clerkenwell of *The Nether World* reverses a tradition in depictions of Clerkenwell. In this tradition it appears as a picturesque urban village, albeit riven by commerce, industry, and decay. In 1840, in *Barnaby Rudge*, Charles Dickens presented Clerkenwell as a simultaneously peripheral and integral part of London. In that novel of recent history he had introduced Clerkenwell as already "the venerable suburb—it was a suburb once" at the time of the novel's setting "six-and-sixty years ago" in the 1770s (Dickens 1892: 29).

> Although this part of town was then, as now, parcelled out in streets, and plentifully peopled, it wore a different aspect. There were gardens to many of the houses, and trees by the pavement side; with an air of freshness breathing up and down, which in these days would be sought in vain. Fields were nigh at hand, through which the New River took its winding course, and where there was merry haymaking in the summer time. Nature was not so far removed, or hard to get at, as in these days; and although there were busy trades in Clerkenwell, and working jewellers by scores, it was a purer place, with farm-houses nearer to it than many modern Londoners would readily believe, and lovers' walks at no great distance, which turned into squalid courts, long before the lovers of this age were born, or, as the phrase goes, thought of. (Ibid.,: 30)

The plot of *Barnaby Rudge* involves numerous getaways through the narrow, labyrinthine streets of the city's less fashionable quarters. Clerkenwell has an ambivalent identity in these action scenes, at once charming (as marked by the proximity of "[n]ature" and "farm-houses") and embedded in the most confusing urban growths. The central site in the Clerkenwell of *Barnaby Rudge* is the sign of the Golden Key, where Gabriel Varden heroically plies his trade as a locksmith. Close to the end of the novel, the narrative steers through "a wilderness of streets" familiar, Dickens claims, to "everybody […] acquainted with the relative bearings of Clerkenwell and Whitechapel" (Dickens 1892: 574).

Historic Clerkenwell, with its literary and architectural associations, is not absent from *The Nether World* (Hutcheon 2018: 63–107), but for Gissing in this novel no remnant of the picturesque remains in its present day. *The Nether World*, for example, contains the invented Shooters Gardens, focused on the "interesting house" shared by "twenty-five persons, men, women and children" including the ironically named Candy and Hope families (Gissing

1992: 249; Finch 2019a: 184–186). Even superior portions of Clerkenwell such as Wilmington Square, close to which the intelligent artisan protagonist Sidney Kirkwood lodges, lack appealing qualities.

Dickens's emphasis on the picturesque in Clerkenwell in 1840 (looking back to the 1770s and beyond) bears comparison with post-World-War-One treatments blending this view with a contrary one, for example in the anti-slum campaigning journalism of Harry Barnes and the naturalist fiction of Arnold Bennett. The word "Clerkenwell" functions in a mantra-like fashion throughout Bennett's 1923 novel *Riceyman Steps*. The main setting of the novel is considerably to the north west of the old centre of Clerkenwell on stairs that are a public street (the *Steps* of the novel's title), leading from the grinding traffic noise of the King's Cross Road to a declined and cramped square, closely based on the real-life Granville Square. The area was, in effect, a suburb of Clerkenwell, developed by the 1840s on land long part of the parish but formerly covered in fields (SoL 47: 264–297). In the opening paragraph of *Riceyman Steps*, King's Cross Road is identified as being "in the great metropolitan industrial district of Clerkenwell" (Bennett [1923]: 1). This identifier might not make Clerkenwell sound very picturesque. But Henry Earlforward, the miserly book-dealer protagonist of Bennett's novel, is a Clerkenwell patriot, raised in the area. He is anxious to show its medieval survivals – "the quarter of the great churches" – to the woman he is courting (Ibid., 62). Myddelton Square in *Riceyman Steps* exemplifies "the more romantic leafy regions of Clerkenwell" (Ibid., 176). In both novels, there is a sense completely lacking from *Demos*, of Clerkenwell as a world in itself, complete with its own higher and lower levels, while it might also be the complete reversal of another London: the upper world of 'society' and the West End.

At the end of the twentieth century the novelist Alan Hollinghurst continued these traditions but in travel writing not fiction. He presented himself as that characteristic London figure the intra-city commuter, resident in one district but knowing another intimately by travelling to it and working there every day. Clerkenwell, after all, had long been an employment centre for Londoners living elsewhere, especially northwards. In an essay contrasting his adoptive hometown London with Houston, Texas, Hollinghurst (1999) identified the blend of past, present, and future within a tight, walkable urbanity as characteristic of the former city, in contrast with the very different North American mode represented by the latter. He called the piece "From Hampstead to Houston." A London of Hampstead on the heights, with Clerkenwell and Camden below, is very much one Gissing would have recognised. In Houston, awareness of "different types of ruin" and what it means to be a boomtown, brings to mind Clerkenwell for Hollinghurst (199, 165). Clerkenwell, for him, does not surround a priory or

even an east-west road cutting through it, but the north-south axis of the mid-Victorian Farringdon Road and Metropolitan Railway, "clustered around a deep railway cutting halfway between the City and West End." Hollinghurst notes the arrival of expensive restaurants and laments the demolition of a vast warehouse made picturesque ("Piranesian") by age, together with a "small-scale Victorian commercial building" which in this view seems to have character – in contrast with the "anonymous" (but equally commercial) architecture that replaces it. Clearly neither Gissing nor Bennett would have found anything aesthetically pleasing about the buildings mourned by Hollinghurst. Dickens in *Barnaby Rudge*, meanwhile, wrote about an era before those buildings were even built, but precision metal trades animated his Clerkenwell, too, with his locksmith character a forerunner of Hollinghurst's "watchmenders."

In fact, while Dickens was referring to what was built up in 1780, therefore the oldest portions of Clerkenwell near its churches, Bennett and Hollinghurst both mean somewhere broader and more personally defined. Bennett's Earlforward is technically a resident of the Metropolitan Borough of Finsbury in an era when Clerkenwell no longer has any formal existence. Hollinghurst places Clerkenwell on either side of the chasm of the Fleet River, which once formed its western boundary, and so includes within it portions of what was formerly Holborn (and is now the London Borough of Camden).

4. A Varied and Expansive Zone: North London in *Demos*

Listing the inner North London toponyms of *Demos* makes the novel's true character apparent. It is a broad portrait of a large and varied segment of London and (what in the twentieth century became) inner suburbs. This contrasts with earlier views of *Demos* as either splenetic ("reeking of hatred for the working class," in one assessment) or justifiable in its response to the masses in industrialised late Victorian England and their growing importance in politics after the Second Reform Act of 1867 (Kermode 1983; Coustillas 2011: 5). The main London zone of *Demos* ranges socially from Hoxton upwards towards the zone where Richard initially imagines living when he inherits money, because it is the most desirable suburb in the sector he knows personally: "somewhere out Green Lanes way, or in Highbury or Holloway" (77). Hoxton is here not an underclass zone as in the twentieth-century memoir written by A. S. Jasper (1969), who was a youth a generation after *Demos* was published, but centrally and solidly working class. Other London localities are glimpsed briefly in *Demos*, for example St John's Wood, where the radical gentleman Westlake lives (82), flashier and less respectable but still socially desirable Bayswater (293) and, less well-favoured, Brixton and the East End (398, 420, 459). There is also the out-of-London England of the Midlands countryside at Wanley.

While there are 75 instances of "Clerkenwell" as a word in *The Nether World*, in *Demos* there are only sixteen. Meanwhile, the four place names "Highbury," "Hoxton," "Islington" and "Pentonville" appear between them 54 times in *Demos*. A number of streets in the St Luke's area are mentioned once: Old Street, City Road, Goswell Road. The picture of London northwards from the City is thus multipolar, and not based on a single place name as in *The Nether World* and *Riceyman Step*s. Working through the places and place names of North London in turn, examining how they appear in *Demos*, enables the suburbanising moves scripted by the novel to be traced. The next section examines the main toponyms in turn. Pentonville, taking in land both north and south of Pentonville Road (including the building of the Angel, Islington) was technically part of St James, Clerkenwell when *Demos* was written (SoL 47: xxii), while Highbury and Holloway, mentioned separately in the section that follows, were northern suburbs of Islington. Clerkenwell and Islington as local government areas in the 1880s had their own urban and suburban portions, so were not divisible into 'Inner London' and 'Outer London' as became usual during the twentieth century and official after 1965 with the formation of Greater London.

The word "Clerkenwell" makes its first appearances in Chapter 17 of *Demos*, and then as part of the name of Clerkenwell Green. This open space, surrounded by streets of factories and workshops, was used for large political meetings throughout the nineteenth century, including by the Chartists in 1842 and the Reform League in 1866 (White [2007]: 365, 371). A few months after the publication of *Demos*, in February 1887, "a meeting and torchlit procession" took place there on the anniversary of the huge socialist demonstration of the previous year in Trafalgar Square leaving "shop windows [smashed] from Clerkenwell Green to Goswell Road" (Ibid., 381). The chapter begins with the emergence of a rival to Richard Mutimer for the allegiance of "the Socialists of that region," Mutimer having left the area for the Midlands after housing his mother and siblings in the local gold (highest-level) region of Highbury. These rivals, led by a man Gissing calls "Comrade Roodhouse," arrange meetings on Clerkenwell Green (238–239). Clerkenwell is the focus of inner North London political activities again in Chapter 31 when we hear that Richard, after returning to London and taking lodgings at Pentonville, "succeeded in forming a new branch of the Union in Clerkenwell, and by contributing half the rent obtained a room for meetings. In this branch he was King Mutimer." Then, in Chapters 34 and 35, uses of the word "Clerkenwell" and the phrase "Clerkenwell Green" all relate to Richard's political agitation which leads to his death. "Clerkenwell" as an entity related to radical politics is thus kept strictly separate from other place names (including "Pentonville"), some of which denote territory that was in the

Parish of Clerkenwell in 1886, prior to the formation of Finsbury Metropolitan Borough. Clerkenwell is above all associated with the word "meeting." A look at the map indicates Clerkenwell as the place through which people heading from Shoreditch, Dalston, Hoxton or Islington towards the West End would naturally move: it is a node of the region.

Hoxton is mentioned 25 times in *Demos*, frequently paired with Islington either in a way that brings the two together or that contrasts them. After two opening chapters indicating the genteel Midlands environs of Wanley, where the proceeds of industry are spent, Chapter 3 is the first London-set chapter of *Demos*. It opens with an extended description of the area either side of the Regent's Canal, Islington to the north and Hoxton to the south, as a division within plebeian London. The identification of the key London setting as the "borderland between Hoxton and Islington" and the political body Richard leads being "the Hoxton and Islington branch of the Union" serve not to distinguish the neighbourhoods from one another but to bring them together (56, 87). Grouped like this, "Hoxton and Islington" become a metonym for plebeian London, as emerges in Richard's rabble-rousing oratory and in his thoughts after he leaves London for Wanley (92, 115). Together, in classic Gissing terms, they equal public houses, greed, exploitation, and an absence of thought or culture.

Regent's Canal near New North Road (© Jason Finch 2020)

Of the two, Hoxton and Islington, the former stands more for industrialised work, drinking and residential squalor: it is the more urban portion, in other words. In Chapter 9, Richard walks half a mile from the house in Highbury

he has taken for his mother, sister and brother, hails a hansom cab and rides in it to the vicinity of the Britannia Theatre, Hoxton, walking from there "by foul streets" to a pub run by the brother of his henchman Daniel Dabbs (138). In the 1880s, the Britannia was Hoxton's most famous landmark, seating four to five thousand people and employing its own full-time company of actors (White [2007]: 276). Hoxton itself was not noted for skilled trades – "the cunning fingers and the contriving brain," to borrow Gissing's phrase from *The Nether World* for central Clerkenwell (Gissing 1992: 11) – but for casual labour, including at City Road Basin, the dock on the Regent's Canal located just outside Hoxton in the City Road West ward of St Luke's (LMA: 30444). When Gissing wrote *Demos*, Hoxton had begun gaining a reputation as a den of thieves, (Ibid., 332–334, 343–344).

During the first half of the twentieth century, when inner London saw a massive exodus of skilled working-class people, Hoxton had as bad a reputation as any London district, one hinted at in the title and contents of A. S. Jasper's memoir of childhood and youth there either side of the First World War, *A Hoxton Childhood* (1969). In *Demos*, senses of Hoxton griminess colour Emma in popular repute when the scandal of "Richard and the obscure work-girl in Hoxton" breaks (292). They also suggest that the "ironmonger's shop in Hoxton" where Richard's wastrel younger brother Harry (always styled "'Arry'" in the text) is apprenticed as his last chance is low down on the scale of London businesses (403). While Hoxton never becomes 'Oxton, it does stand for the lower sections of the urban world in "Richard's avoidance of his Hoxton friends" after inheriting money (249). The Hoxton of *Demos* is neither a micro-locality as the Lambeth of *Thyrza* is (Finch 2018a: 7 – 8; Finch 2018b: 28) and nor is it a vision of hell transferred to contemporary London as Whitehead correctly identifies the inner Clerkenwell of *The Nether World* to be. Instead, the Hoxton of *Demos* stands for the unrelievedly plebeian – it contains the 'Mean Streets' which Arthur Morrison in the 1890s would later put in the East End as a whole. Compared to Hoxton, Islington is the suburban or suburbanising side of the "dun borderland" around the canal, the grimly respectable side (56).

Gissing expresses this view of it, combined with the pairing of the two districts already mentioned, in scene-setting depth at the opening of Chapter 3 of *Demos*, a passage that will be discussed separately below. Most of the mentions of Islington after that are in the pairing "Hoxton and Islington," while the fact that the respectable still-outer-London suburbs of Highbury and Holloway were technically part of Islington's very large civil parish (as was the northern strip of Pentonville) is left out. Hoxton (formally in Shoreditch, which in 1900 became a metropolitan borough itself) and Islington have never

been in the same local government area. But Hoxton and southern or central Islington share a postcode: N1 since 1917. They are in a sense North London while Clerkenwell and St Luke's are East Central, a subtle but important distinction. "Hoxton and Islington" is thus a largish unit of lower London in *Demos*, and a kind of microcosm of working-class England, considering that the novel's full title is *Demos: A Story of English Socialism*. Whitehead (2019a) has noted, as a negative, the limited nature of the portrait of locality in *Demos* compared with those of Clerkenwell and surroundings in *The Nether World*, and of Lambeth in *Thyrza*. But the somewhat schematic place description of *Demos* and its focus on the (largely negative) character of the London masses instead of on topographies perhaps derives from Gissing's effort to make this novel model the negative effect of the materialistic and uncultured English environment on the doctrines of socialism, imported from the Continent. The word to emphasise in the subtitle is thus not "Socialism" but "English."

An individual address in Islington, Wilton Square, is mentioned more times than Islington itself in *Demos*, nineteen overall. This is the "certain square on the borders of Hoxton and Islington, within scent of the Regent's Canal," where Richard was raised (115). Here, "within scent" emphasises the square's pretensions: since you can smell the canal from there, it cannot be genteel.

Wilton Square (© Jason Finch 2020)

Portions of Islington slightly further west, close to where Gissing actually lodged in 1879 to 1880, get a comparable treatment in *The Nether World*:

outside the abyss but on its edge, to paraphrase Forster in *Howards End*. Wilton Square was (and still is) "an irregular triangle" containing houses "of one storey, with kitchen windows looking upon small areas; the front door is reached by an ascent of five steps" (56, 57). The technique involves precision about minute distinctions of location and architecture. Wilton Square is identified as being "[o]n the dun borderland of Islington and Hoxton, in a corner made by the intersection of the New North Road and the Regent's Canal" (56). In Gissing's account, it is notable for having in its centre "an amorphous structure, which on examination proves to be a very ugly house and a still uglier Baptist chapel built back to back" (56–57). There is a small anticipation of *The Nether World*'s fuller aesthetic transformation of the inner city into hell in the quotation from Dante's *Purgatorio* used to joke about the canal "*maladetta e sventurata fossa*—stagnating in utter foulness between coal-wharfs and builders' yards." The canal, Gissing claims, is a firm dividing line between two socially distinct neighbourhoods, working-class Hoxton to its south, "everywhere toil in its most degrading forms" whereas

> [w]alking northwards, the explorer finds himself in freer air, amid broader ways, in a district of dwelling-houses only; the roads seem abandoned to milkmen, cat's meat vendors and costermongers. Here will be found streets in which every window has its card advertising lodgings; others claim a higher respectability, the houses retreating behind patches of garden-ground, and occasionally showing plastered pillars and a balcony. The change is from undisguised struggle for subsistence to mean and spirit-broken leisure; hither retreat the better-paid of the great slave-army when they are free to eat and sleep. To walk about a neighbourhood such as this is the dreariest exercise to which man can betake himself; the heart is crushed by uniformity of decent squalor; one remembers that each of these dead-faced houses, often each separate blind window, represents a 'home,' and the associations of the word whisper blind decay. (57)

Wilton Square is placed "on the north side of the foss, on the edge of the quieter district." With characteristic irony, Gissing suggests that the "uniformity" of the semi-respectable district is worse than places where the "struggle for subsistence" is "undisguised." The point is to emphasise the economic range within an urban immensity governed by a single – inhumane – economic system.

Throughout *Demos* the Wilton Square house where the widowed Mrs Mutimer and her three adult children live at the beginning of the novel, is a kind of touchstone of ordinariness for the class Gissing labels the "mechanic" class. Daniel Dabbs, for instance, is "in most things a typical English mechanic" (383). When Richard gets into a jealous rage with Adela, she feels he speaks "like any London mechanic, with defect and excess of aspirates, with neglect of g's at the end of words" (365). The Mutimers reside at Wilton Square because of the labour of Richard's father Joseph, a "harmless necessary artisan" who "earned a

living by dint of incessant labour, brought up his family in an orderly way, and departed with a certain sense of satisfaction at having fulfilled obvious duties" (57). The move to Highbury when Richard inherits a fortune from his namesake great-uncle, a Midlands industrialist, is a move towards instability for Mrs Mutimer who is never comfortable in the upscale suburb. When the Mutimers go to Highbury, the Wilton Square house becomes home to Emma Vine and her sisters. For them, this move is an ascent from rooms in Hoxton, but they affect the local social tone themselves by adding "a notice in the window that dress-making and millinery were carried on within" (141). Mrs Mutimer is "constantly" drawn back to Wilton Square to visit the Vines then, as it were finding her own level, moves back there after Emma rejects Richard's patronage, his social-climbing marriage to Adela having become known (204, 240–241).

The most impoverished parts of London mentioned in *Demos* all lie in what, until 1900, was the civil parish of St Luke's – or to give it the official name it bears on an 1855 map made in the year the Metropolitan Board of Works was established, Saint Luke Middlesex (LMA: 30444). They are not in London's Northern postal district, but its East-Central one, although they lie due north of the City of London. Gissing deliberately labels such distinctions not just by naming neighbourhoods and prominent streets, but by including a postal code. When, staying at Wanley, Alice Mutimer spots a letter addressed to "Mrs Mutimer," in other words Adela, newly married to Alice's brother, recognises the handwriting of Kate Clay and confirms her suspicion by inspecting the envelope: "The Post-Mark? Yes, it was London, E.C." (276). The actual name of St Luke's does not appear in *Demos*. Instead, Gissing alludes to it via street names, mostly those of the area's thoroughfares (through which middle-class readers would typically have passed in hansoms or on omnibuses, making the roads known to them if the intricate local government details were not). St Luke's is the area where the lowest and most extreme slums are situated in Gissing's *Workers in the Dawn*. The plot of Gissing's debut novel spirals outwards from Adam and Eve Court, off Whitecross Street, as Dennis (2010b) has charted. It lies immediately to the east of old Clerkenwell, the hellishly extreme slum area of *The Nether World*.

The thoroughfares spanning or bordering St Luke's include Old Street, the City Road, and Goswell Road. The first of these receives one mention, in Chapter 16, after Richard has jilted Emma:

> In the afternoon Emma went forth to fulfil her intention of finding lodgings. She avoided the neighbourhood in which she had formerly lived, and after long search discovered what she wanted in a woeful byway near Old Street. It was one room only, but larger than she had hoped to come upon; fortunately her own furniture had been preserved, and would now suffice. (237)

From there she walks to Highbury where she leaves the key to Wilton Square – demonstration enough that this is a single sector. The City Road, next, is the section of the New Road, London's eighteenth-century bypass, dividing St Luke's and Clerkenwell proper to the south from Hoxton and Islington to the north. It is mentioned once in *Demos*, as the place where Emma and her sister move after leaving the "woeful byway": "The sisters were now living in a street crossing the angle between Goswell Road and the City Road" (389). This is a distance northwards from Old Street, close to the Angel with the suburbs of Highbury and Holloway off beyond that, and thus could seem an improvement. Although Edwin Reardon in *New Grub Street* moves to a 'slum' in Islington after the collapse of his marriage (Gissing 2003: 244; cf. Finch 2015: 56–62), in *Demos* Islington stands for a rung up the London ladder from Hoxton and two from the (unnamed) civil parish of St Luke's. After being attacked by the mob on Clerkenwell Green, Gissing specifies that it is in this precise house, about twelve minutes' walk away, that Richard is able to take refuge when Emma sees him after he is "swept away from the Green" by the crowd (444). Mutimer is then killed by a chunk of rock "hurled with deadly force and precision" when leaning out of an upper-storey sash window at this house (446). We know the house to be located east of Goswell Road because it fits into "the angle between" there and City Road. Therefore it is technically in St. Luke's, not Clerkenwell, even though Gissing identifies the site of the death as "the Clerkenwell room" (449; for an 1855 map, LMA: 30444). It might be that the house where Emma and her sister are living is in one of the streets north of Lever Street (today in EC1) such as Hall Street, Moreland Street or Rahere Street. The atmosphere of the house is conjured by relations of sound between its rooms and the street (448), something Gissing also does powerfully in the Lambeth dwelling of the Trent sisters in *Thyrza*.

Next, let us survey the more suburban regions of the pre-1900 civil parishes of Clerkenwell and Islington. Most of Pentonville, as stated already, was technically part of Clerkenwell when Gissing wrote. Today, with its N1 postcode and the incorporation of the LCC-era borough of Finsbury in the post-1965 London Borough of Islington, Pentonville is typically regarded as a south-western section of Islington. It receives six mentions in *Demos*, the first in Chapter 26: "Adela found herself alighting at a lodging-house not far from the reservoir at the top of Pentonville Hill. Mutimer had taken these rooms a week ago" (350–351). Alice calls "living in two furnished rooms" there a "nice come-down for my lady" – meaning Adela, and indicating the marginality of the area and mode of living to 1880s London gentility (353). The position of these lodgings on "Pentonville Hill" is again affirmed when Richard returns on foot and by omnibus and hansom from Bayswater where Alice lives when married

(363). Later, Alice and her husband move to Wimbledon, far out in the south-western suburbs and in a completely different sector of the metropolis from that where Alice's roots are (399). As elsewhere in Gissing and later in Forster's *Howards End*, the getting of money is linked to acts of displacement from locality and shifts towards nomadism (Finch 2011: 259–271); Alice is left in the house by her disreputable husband, knowing no one locally. Pentonville, for its part, is an area of "cheap furnished lodgings" (351). This was a quintessentially middle-class London suburb in the early nineteenth century, on heights to which people formerly resident in Holborn or Bloomsbury might move. By the 1880s, on the evidence of *Demos*, it had become what twentieth-century cities would label a twilight zone. Acquisition of money once more makes Richard restless and he moves Adela to Holloway – an appropriately in-between area considering their uncertain social status (396). Pentonville then disappears.

Highbury receives twelve mentions, all connected with "the house at Highbury" to which the Mutimers minus Richard are "removed from Wilton Square" after he inherits the money (127). The contrast between this northern portion of Islington and the southern parts is not emphasised: instead, the toponym serves to mark the desirable. Considering other treatments in texts of the 1880s and 1890s, Highbury is where Josh Perrott, the protagonist's father in Morrison's *A Child of the Jago* (1896), goes burgling from his slum home 2.5 miles south east of it (Morrison 2012: 114). Charles Booth's 1890s poverty maps show Highbury New Park and a few roads of houses near it as the only gold streets north of the river and east of Bloomsbury (Booth [1898–1899]). The house they move to is described, and it is clearly not the very grandest sort of Highbury house: "It was a semi-detached villa, stuccoed, bow-windowed, of two storeys, standing pleasantly on a wide road skirted by similar dwellings, and with a row of acacias in front" (129). The Mutimers' house is large enough to be called "the big house in Highbury" by Kate Clay (277), but she comes from poverty in Hoxton. Not very many Highbury houses surviving into the twenty-first century fit the house's description: most are of more than two storeys whether they are grand villas (detached or semi-detached) for example on Highbury New Park, or terraces on more cramped streets to the west towards Highbury Corner. Nor are many stuccoed, although there is perhaps evidence supporting a position for the house which Richard takes closer to Canonbury station or even to the east near Barnsbury Square. Highbury New Park, a middle-class suburban development of the 1850s, did contain some two-storey stuccoed residences, but "bow-windowed" sounds like a house from another Victorian decade (Hinchcliffe 1981: 34 Plate IIA). Earlier, in *Workers in the Dawn*, Gissing had chosen Highbury as the location of a privileged character's home

that is nevertheless still in the same geographical orbit as the slums of St Luke's – in this instance the philanthropic intellectual heroine Helen Norman.[1]

The other northern suburb of Islington, less socially elevated and still further north from Clerkenwell and Hoxton, is Holloway. It gets ten mentions in *Demos*. After inheriting money Richard considers living there then settles on Highbury (77). The other nine mentions are all towards the end of *Demos*. At the beginning of Chapter 32, Richard, now in coin again, leaves the Pentonville lodgings, moving Adela and himself to "a house in Holloway, the rent twenty-eight pounds, the situation convenient for his purposes" (396). By the time of the First World War, Holloway contained some of North London's most notorious streets. Their decline had begun in the 1870s, well before the publication of *Demos* – indeed, it was almost immediate for streets that were too close to railways and which failed to find respectable tenants when built (White [1986]: 12–13). By the time the Mutimers move there, Holloway had "lost its edge-of-town character," becoming "an unexceptional London suburb" of the Victorian sort (Ibid., 8–9).

Finally, to turn back to what was once the whole of London, let us consider the City. With no article and uncapitalised, there are 27 uses of the word *city* in *Demos*. Capitalised and with article "the," there are seven. A core complexity in London urbanity consists of relations between the City of London and the metropolis or urban area of London. The City Corporation was the historical government of London and even a rival to the Crown in the region around London. By the late nineteenth century it was "an institution dedicated to fighting change" which had "rejected its suburbs" and now contained a negligible proportion of London's population – at least as residents (Porter [1994]: 295). *Demos*'s sector of London looks towards the City more than towards the West End. Four chapters from the novel's end, out of work before getting his last chance at the ironmongers', 'Arry passes his time by "loafing about the streets of Hoxton and the City." 'Arry is perhaps doomed by his effort to act like a West End man about town when, Gissing announces, he was among "the sons of mechanics […] ruined morally by being taught to consider themselves above manual labour" (400). It is not in the West End, though, but while hanging around the streets and pubs of "Hoxton and the City" that 'Arry establishes himself as "the aristocrat of rowdyism" (401) – in other words gets himself a following among yobs and drunks. Perhaps the location of his loafing leads to his downfall in that, being apprenticed to a Hoxton ironmonger rather than, say, to one in Holloway, these bad influences track him down (he is caught stealing from the till). Richard, in other words, sends 'Arry back to the city (not in but next to the City of London), rather than rescuing him from it.

Otherwise, the City is a place of work which seems to be far from honest toil. At the start of *Demos*, the young Alice Mutimer is employed in "the show-rooms of a City warehouse" no doubt on account of her physical attractiveness. The family having come into money she later marries the dubious Rodman, who is linked to "the City" (356, 399). In the last stages of his own vanity-driven career of utter failure, 'Arry Mutimer accosts Rodman on the streets of the City in the hope of getting a handout (423). The place where money for capitalism is raised, the City of London ultimately becomes directly linked to financial crimes of deception, like the one in which Richard Mutimer is embroiled by Rodman (432), as on a larger scale it would be in Gissing's later novel of the corrupt above-ground, not nether, world, *The Whirlpool*. In the City, its characteristics spreading throughout the city, swindlers find their eager victims among the greedy.

5. Walks and Photographs around Hoxton, 1945–2019

Here I follow somewhat in the footsteps of Whitehead who, "[o]n a sunny weekend afternoon" (Whitehead 2013: 19), perhaps in the early 2010s, took a walk through "[t]oday's 'Nether World'" which he appended to his account of Gissing's 1889 novel. Whitehead seems to have begun in the centre of old Clerkenwell at St John's Square, then headed north via Clerkenwell Close and the nineteenth-century social housing built to replace declined earlier tenements as documented by Gissing there. Reaching Exmouth Market, part-way through gentrification when Whitehead visited, he turned back south again to Farringdon Road, the first main slum-clearance artery of the area, built over the old Fleet River.

As in Lambeth, I chronicled the walk with photographs collected afterwards in an online album (Finch 2019b). I walked on the afternoon and early evening of Sunday 20 October 2019, from Bank Station northwards to the Regent's Canal via the Old Street Roundabout, now associated with tech businesses, commemorated in the new street name of Silicon Way (Finch 2019b: DSC_0186–0203, DSC_0207). Next I progressed up East Street and New North Road where much Victorian housing once stood, little now remaining, and much twentieth-century social housing stands, some looking decayed (Ibid., DSC_0209–0230, DSC_0236–0237). Then I crossed the lively canal surrounded by bright colour to Wilton Square (Ibid., DSC_0231–0234, DSC_0239–0252), still cramped but the houses now prosperous and gentrified. After this, I went westwards along the canal to Shepherdess Walk (Ibid., DSC_0268–0284), south to the City Road meeting it by the famous Eagle pub (Ibid., DSC_0285–0290).

On the wall in Shepherdess Place due south of the Eagle – historically in Hoxton – two boundary markers survive, dating from 1864 and 1893 and indicating the northern border of the Parish of St Luke, Middlesex (Ibid., DSC_0287–0288).

Boundary Markers in the Parish of St Luke, Middlesex (© Jason Finch)

As the autumn afternoon light faded, the route led southwards from there through the centre of St Luke's past Finsbury Baths and the former St Luke's Church (Ibid., DSC_0295–310), crossing Old Street to Whitecross Street, totemic slum area of Gissing's *Workers in the Dawn*. Finally, I reached Barbican Station via the Golden Lane Estate. This walk was entirely to the east of the actual borders of Clerkenwell, the eastern border of which is the line of Aldersgate Street and Goswell Road, running up to Angel (SoL 46: xxii).

The walk and the pictures taken on it can join Gissing's *Demos* as evidence of the "dun borderland between Hoxton and Islington." Another exhibit is a group of images of the area, chiefly from the period between the 1950s and the 1970s, displayed on the London Metropolitan Archives' online picture library *Collage*. The area on Old Street, far from the image of 'Silicon Roundabout' is the most declined and low-status portion of North London indicated in *Demos*. Emma goes there when she has nothing. In 1974, decades after World War Two, Old Street and the junction of Helmet Row next to the former St Luke's Church building (closed by the Church of England in 1959) contained derelict buildings and suggestions of the 1880s atmosphere Gissing feels no need to conjure in narrating Emma's move, letting the toponym "Old Street" do the talking (LMA: 61354).

On the walk, several details of the area partly preserving its qualities as an urban place in Gissing's time and in intervening stages stood out. Methodists connected with the Leys School in Cambridge established the Leysian Mission in Whitecross Street, St Luke's, the same year *Demos* was published. It moved to a purpose-built grand redbrick building in 1902. The impressive building still stands and with its original name in terracotta lettering (Finch 2019b: DSC_0193), although the Leysian Mission merged with the nearby Wesley's Chapel in 1989. The rainbow-striped pedestrian crossing near the former Leysian Mission building represents the post-1990 revival hereabouts (Ibid., DSC_0197).

On the left the Leysian Mission and the nearby rainbow-striped crossing (© Jason Finch 2020)

Many carriageways intersect here, still, but the shift in emphasis towards cyclists and pedestrians visible in 2019 through publicly displayed maps and signage (DSC_0186–0192), create an atmosphere very different from that choked by lorries as recorded in 1961 before the roundabout was built (LMA: 63362). The Hoxton portion of New North Road and the area on either side of the canal display recent changes that are even more pronounced. In southern New North Road during the 1970s there were still large Victorian terraced houses seemingly in the last stages of decay. Viewing a 1976 photograph of the houses, it is hard to believe that 37–41 New North Road survived that decade, let alone would still stand forty-plus years on, but they do (LMA Collage 119081). This was the section of New North Road, presumably, where A. S. Jasper and his family lived some sixty years before this photograph was taken. North of the canal, in Islington proper (postcode N1), in Arlington Square and surroundings, public gardens are now beautifully conserved indications of the area's transition from early-stage gentrifying semi-bohemia in the 1960s and 1970s to high-value property on the international market now (Finch 2019b: DSC_0264–0266). Securitised new residential squares and warehouses renovated into new commercial expanses have appeared in the twenty-first century both north and south of the Regent's Canal near the northern end of Shepherdess Walk (Finch 2019b: DSC_0267, 0283). Yet on Shepherdess Walk a curve of perhaps 1850s terracing indicates the long-held shabbiness of the area (Finch 2019b: DSC_0274–0279). Here, surprisingly little seems to have changed since 1967 (LMA: 114265), despite the immensely increased financial value of both residential and commercial property in the area. Old sash windows, not unlike the one out of which Richard Mutimer is leaning when killed, are still intact. These seem houses still let to students or social tenants rather than owned by bankers or tech business people.

6. Conclusion: Boarders and Borders in a Polycentric London

The Nether World does stage the suburbanising move of Sidney Kirkwood from Clerkenwell at the beginning of the novel to Crouch End, another mile north of Holloway, at its end. But the urban world of *The Nether World* is for the most part claustrophobically that of Clerkenwell Close, the knot of streets just north of Clerkenwell Green. *Demos*, in contrast, charts a wide-ranging urban zone containing levels from the most degraded in London (never so epitomised or rhetorically dramatised as in the 1889 novel) through various working-class strata to a level in which newcomers to the city take lodgings in rooms of houses where they could enjoy a pseudo-rich sort of existence. Maps reveal that this zone contains Wilton Square at a point approximately equidistant

between the slums south of Old Street to the south and Highbury New Park to the north. It is a zone that people leave when they become established whether in the countryside, at Bayswater – or at Bow Road, in a more respectable portion of East London, where Emma ends up, maintaining "that serenity which comes of duties honestly performed and a life tolerably free from sordid anxiety" (459). Clerkenwell in *Demos* is one centre in a polycentric London. It is the capital of the London which Richard Mutimer knows, London sectors and districts being notoriously alien and even hostile to each other. This makes it appropriate as the site of Richard's violent death at the hands of the mob he once led.

Clerkenwell is an area with a fairly rich literary history, as the survey of Dickens, Bennett, and Hollinghurst above shows, and its status in *The Nether World* as a modern hell is well established. But this broader imaginative place zone, to use the terminology of Deep Locational Criticism (Finch 2016) is far less well known. The careful deployment of toponyms – the names of streets and districts – was central to Gissing's literary reworking of the city he inhabited during the 1880s. His main effort in *Demos*, however, was not to represent the city, but to dramatise the operation of socialism in the context of the English class system – materialistic and hypocritical, as he saw it. Two novels written in quick succession, *Demos* and *Thyrza*, follow a practice he began in *Workers in the Dawn*, of representing England as a whole by oscillating between a largely plebeian London and an out-of-London setting where leisured and genteel characters are central. In the early 1890s, he would blur and modify the opposition in the town and country oscillations of *New Grub Street* and *Born in Exile*.

The London of *Demos* reaches beyond the sector in focus here, not least in urban moves through western and south-western districts connected with Rodman, who is gradually exposed as a swindler and bigamist. Rodman himself is linked to international, even global, movements of people and capital. He keeps Alice at Bayswater ("her more fashionable quarter" in comparison to Wilton Square) and later Wimbledon, then is forced to house the wife, Clara, and son he earlier abandoned in New York at a house in Brixton, Clara having spotted him in the drinking den where she works as a barmaid (356, 419). Alice and Clara's moves across a broader metropolis happen by "omnibus" and "tramway" (356, 427), which indicates the growing public transport network of the 1880s as another structuring system alongside the suburbanising move outwards in a given direction typified in the Hoxton to Holloway sector on which this article has concentrated. It is an omnibus, too, which takes Adela to visit Emma in the "far East End" at the very end of *Demos*, taking yet another direction on the metropolitan clock face (459).

Hoxton and Islington are areas with less well-established histories as parts of mythic London than Clerkenwell has. Both experienced a startling social ascent – from notoriety in one case, obscurity in the other – beginning in the last decades of the twentieth century. Gissing uses them as zones typifying instability. This relates to a recent history pointing at an uncertain future, in the 1880s, in which the status of Highbury remained at stake – as it filled with smaller houses and gained some wealthy Jewish inhabitants in its larger, earlier streets (Hinchcliffe 1981: 44 fn. 41). As a novel of large-scale displacement, affecting almost every character contained in its complex plot, *Demos* is a forerunner of Gissing's later novel of advanced – or decadent – financialisation and globalisation, *The Whirlpool*. Finally, far from being a kind of para-source for urban historians, urban histories must investigate human imaginaries of the sorts that literary texts propose and reveal.

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[1] I am grateful to Richard Dennis and Tanis Hinchcliffe for their expertise and for the time both spent thinking on my behalf about where in Highbury or neighbouring sections of Islington the Mutimers' house could seem to be. Gissing's Highbury merits further investigation.

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Book Review

Arlene Young, *From Spinster to Career Woman: Middle-Class Women and Work in Victorian England*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019. 218pp. ISBN: 9780773557079. $29.95 PB.

The radical social and cultural transformation which occurred in Britain during the period of senescence of the Victorian age, allowing middle-class women to leave their traditional role of seclusion in the domestic sphere and to take up the challenge of professionalised work, has attracted growing attention from twentieth-century critics, especially those interested in the New Woman and gender studies. In the wake of these critical discourses (in which Lee Holcombe's *Victorian Ladies at Work: Middle-Class Working Women in England and Wales, 1850-1914* appears as an incisive pioneering study) comes Arlene Young's *From Spinster to Career Woman: Middle-Class Women and Work in Victorian England*, an insightful and compelling historical and socio-cultural analysis of the rise of the mid- and late-Victorian middle-class woman who yearns for independence and achieves it by means of certain types of job.

Young's main purpose is to expand the already vast critical debate around the New Woman through a detailed and exciting analysis of the positions of the nurse and the typist. Emerging in the second half of the nineteenth-century (namely, when the patriarchal ideology of the public-domestic dichotomy for men and women was still entrenched) these two female professions provoked a lively debate and harsh criticism. Public opinion denied the possibility for women who intended to enter the world of professionalised work to preserve their moral integrity and ethical values such as were defined during the first decades of the Victorian era. In the course of her study, Young persuasively highlights the effort of female labour supporters to bring about a full acceptance of the independent woman. The author compares articles taken from periodicals of the time that treated the social position of nurses and typists with coeval novels among whose main characters we find women who took up the challenge of professional work. This investigation aims at an in-depth understanding of the factors that led to the transition from the Victorian woman relegated to the domestic sphere to that of the Career Woman of the modern age.

The first chapter, "The Woman Question and the One Thing Needful: Work," shows how in late nineteenth-century British censuses the number of women excessively surpassed that of men, and it explains how this demographic imbalance would be considered as one of the main causes that

pushed middle-class women towards professionalised work. Young also highlights how the by then consolidated mid-Victorian female stereotype, according to which "women have not their livelihood to gain by knowledge" (Smith, 307), was put into question in the last decades of the century. In this regard, Young rightly underlines how the Education Act of 1870 favoured a middle-class education system, thus facilitating the path towards the professionalisation of work, including that of women. The educational system's reforms, Young underlines, were fundamental in the creation of the so-called 'cultural constructions' as the Strong-Minded Woman and the Glorified Spinster.

The second chapter, "The Strong-Minded Victorian Nurse: The Disputes over Nursing and Reform Hospital," examines the middle-class woman's entry into the field of hospital nursing. The author undertakes a line of inquiry which compares two opposing currents of opinion (supporters and detractors) whose fierce clash took place especially in newspapers and specialised magazines causing a veritable social crisis in the period between 1873 and 1884. Such a debate acquired a decisive role, contributing – in the wake of those reforms that had transformed the health system – the outline of a new definition and reorganisation of the nursing branch in London hospitals. This chapter persuasively highlights how, starting from the entry of the United Kingdom into the Crimean War in 1854, the hospital nurse underwent a process of radical transformation over the following decades, moving from an unqualified and menial activity to a truly professionalised and highly respectable one, first and foremost through debates in which the hospital nurse was discussed in relation to issues of gender, class, and religion.

In the third chapter, "'Books are Better Than That': The Representation of the Nurse in Victorian Fiction," Arlene Young explores some of the main literary representations (in novels, biographies, and memoirs) of the hospital nurse, and of the relation between middle-class women and work in general. Young draws particular attention to the struggle women undertook in order to be recognised as fully-fledged members of that socio-economic system. In a detailed and compelling analysis of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853), for instance, Young highlights how the relationship between women and work was considered by contemporaries as one of the major (and most dangerous) contaminations – alongside the immorality of fallen women and other 'faults' as illegitimacy – which characterise the eponymous protagonist. Differently from other literary critics, Young asserts that Ruth dies "not [...] because she must expiate her sin, but because of the taint of work and the taint of fallenness are so closely bound

in Victorian concepts of womanhood." (65) Young never misses a chance to stress that novelists and essayists of that time intended to participate in the cultural debate concerning the middle-class woman who works, in order to induce public opinion to recognise female work not only as professional, but also – and above all – as highly respectable and appropriate for women. Therefore, female work should no longer be considered only as the solution to the social marginalisation for sexually compromised women. Young concludes her chapter by emphasising how some publications in the late nineteenth century fostered a female model who, while favouring a working career at the expense of the traditionally female domestic sphere, managed to maintain a social position of unambiguous respect.

In the fourth chapter, "Work and the Challenges of Modernity: The Victorian Typewriter," Young's socio-cultural analysis of professionalised female work shifts from the hospital nurse to the typist, a highly desirable profession for late-Victorian middle-class women. The most interesting part of this chapter is undoubtedly that in which Young convincingly rejects other scholars' theories according to which the typewriter was merely a means to offer clerical opportunities to women. According to Young, the reason for this socio-cultural development can be traced to the fact that the emerging self-driven woman was able to recognise the enormous potential of new technologies (such as, in this case, the typewriter) as a means through which she could express and prove her own abilities.

Young's discussion on the late-Victorian typist becomes particularly intriguing when in her fifth chapter, "'In Business to Stay': The Typewriter in Victorian Fiction," she examines the fictional representation of the female white-collar worker, paying particular attention to the potential conflict between femininity and professional work. Young clearly and effectively emphasises how typing offered for middle-class women an opportunity to escape from domestic duties, as well as a possibility of independence and emancipation. Through an insightful analysis of the female white-collar worker in novels such as James Payn's *Thicker Than Water* (1883), George Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1893), Geraldine Mitton's *A Bachelor Girl in London* (1893), Grant Allen's *The Type-Writer Girl* (1897) and George Brown Burgin's *Settled Out of Court* (1898), Arlene Young deals with some of the most compelling and controversial issues (such as class and gender) which at the time most affected professional middle-class women. She traces, furthermore, how the female model that resulted – namely an "attractive, accomplished, and marriageable

young wom[a]n working in close proximity to men" (126) – caused a large and worrying social anxiety within late-Victorian society.

The concluding chapter, "'What Shall We Do with Our Daughters?': The Women's Press and the Mainstream Media in the 1890s," outlines the fundamental role of media in the struggle professionalised women undertook in the attempt to define their role in the public field during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Young highlights the commitment of the press in public debates on concerns regarding the relationship between women who worked and the role they should have according to the traditional Victorian conception specifically performed within the domestic environment. That, Young points out, became the subject of a gradual but radical change in the way of thinking of British society. She furthermore highlights that towards the end of the nineteenth century society started to feel the need for adequate education not only for the coming generations of girls (so that they would be able to competently embrace professional work as much as men), but also – and above all – for society in its entirety, in order to allow a recognition of women's significant role in the public sphere.

Young's arguments really catch the interest of Victorianists across disciplines, since she examines the relationship between women and work in depth, covering a large number of fields. Thanks to a wide selection of supporting textual evidence, her book overall succeeds in broadening our attention to the radical change concerning the role of women in the workplace during the last decades of the Victorian era. Through an acute analysis of how urgent issues such as respectability, femininity, and class-belonging were discussed in novels and media, Young offers a thoroughly persuasive critical dissertation on the two main factors that led to the professionalising of female work, namely the need to work and the connected creation of clerical job opportunities for middle-class women as a consequence of the demographic imbalance between the sexes in Victorian Britain.

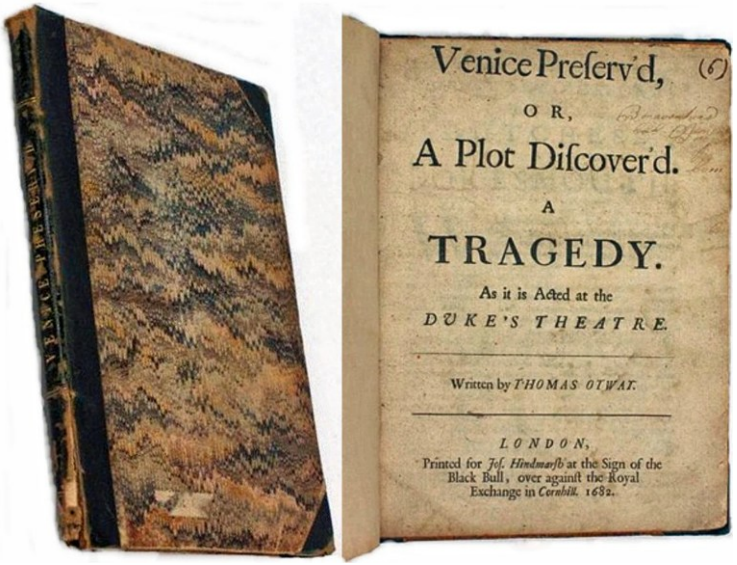
This book is particularly interesting because it presents a lucid, in-depth, and well-argued explanation of how a radical change in the "the habit of thinking" (James Hinton, "On Nursing as a Profession," *Cornhill Magazine*, 22 (1870): 451) across all areas of British culture was needed from the second half of the 1800s to make it possible for female work to be perceived and recognised on a socio-cultural level as necessary and appropriate for middle-class women.

Luca Brezzo, University of Genoa

Chit-Chat

Whilst rereading *Isabel Clarendon* recently, I was struck by the scene in which the rector, a collector of antiquated dramatic works and a true bibliophile, is completely blown over when Kingcote shows him a first edition of Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserv'd, or, A Plot Discover'd. A tragedy. As it is Acted at the Duke's Theatre*, which he had just purchased for one penny from "a musty little shop" in Salcot East. Out of curiosity I decided to look the book up on the Internet and was only able to discover a single first edition published by "London for Jos. Hindmarsh at the Sign of the Black Bull, over against the Royal Exchange at Cornhill. 1682" at the Heritage Bookshop in of all places Tarzana, California, the neighbourhood of Los Angeles where Tarzan got his name.

The extremely rare slim quarto hardback of 72 pages was for sale at £376. According to a UK inflation calculator, which I consulted online, that amount would have been worth £2-7s-7d in 1885, so indeed Kingcote did get a decent bargain on his way through the town, or, ironically as Gissing doubtless intended, more or less recovered in advance the £3 that were later stolen from him. But that was, of course, all forgotten when Kingcote set eyes on Isabel Clarendon for the first time shortly afterwards.


Venice Preſerv'd, (6)

OR,

A Plot Diſcover'd.

A

TRAGEDY.

As it is Acted at the

DUKE'S THEATRE.

Written by THOMAS OTWAY.

LONDON,

Printed for Joſ. Hindmarſh at the Sign of the Black Bull, over againſt the Royal Exchange in Cornhill. 1682.

1682 First edition of Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserv'd* (© Heritage Bookshop 2020)

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Notes and News

At 10.45 p.m. on Monday, 13 April, BBC Radio Three broadcast the first of five essays on single women by Rachel Cooke, the journalist and author of *Her Brilliant Career: Ten Extraordinary Women of the Fifties* (2013). The BBC website describes the subjects of the individual essays as follows, one of which was about Gissing's *The Odd Women*:

> Rachel Cooke explores five versions of the single woman. She starts with the spinster, a word which once had positive origins but is nowadays associated with loneliness and unhappiness. To counter these stereotypes, Rachel takes as her starting point George Gissing's 1893 novel *The Odd Women*, whose heroines are independent and brave. She explores the shift from spinsters as businesswomen, handling their own affairs, to the repressed and downtrodden figures of more recent popular culture, and argues it is time to embrace the word 'odd.'

I discovered recently that the Wartime Memories Project at https://www.wartimememoriesproject.com/greatwar/view.php?uid=223970 has a website devoted to the British Army 1st/16th Queens Westminster Rifles Battalion, London Regiment, in which George Gissing's eldest son, Walter Leonard, served during the First World War. Walter's page describes him as a rifleman, service number 4620, and sums up his life thus: "Walter L. Gissing was the eldest son of the English author George Gissing. He was killed at Gommecourt on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. He was 24 and single. He is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial." The photograph on the right is a fine one of Walter in his army uniform.

Walter Leonard Gissing
(© Wartime Memories Project 2020)

Several other soldiers from the battalion who, like Walter, died on 1 July 1916 at the Battle of the Somme are also commemorated on the website. One of these, Albert John Miles, aged 31 at his death, was a rifleman as well, and formerly a servant "in a house in Hanover Square." Sadly, being much older than most of his comrades in the battalion, he left a widow.

I am pleased to inform readers that the most recent issue of *Victoriographies: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century Writing, 1790–1914*, published by Edinburgh University Press, is a George Gissing special, guest edited by Tom Ue under the themed title "Gissing's *Born in Exile* and the *Fin de Siècle*." *Born in Exile* has been somewhat neglected of late and has been out of print since the excellent Everyman edition of 1993. Fortunately, copies can still be snapped up online at the major bookselling websites such as Abebooks.co.uk, Bookfinder.com, and Amazon. This special issue of *Victoriographies* includes a preface by Ue on "Godwin at a Crossroads," and is followed by four essays by Lynda Mugglestone, Richard Dennis, Constance Harsh, and Jeremy Tambling (see "Recent Publications" below), each of which focuses on *Born in Exile* in new ways. Rachel Bowlby wraps up the Gissing contributions with an afterword.

On 3 April the Gissing brothers were given two substantial mentions in the *Times Literary Supplement*. In the first, a compilation of well-known cultural personalities describing what they were reading to cope with lockdown during the Covid-19 virus threat, Margaret Drabble, the distinguished, veteran English novelist, wrote that "I have been reading George Gissing compulsively for the past month or two, and am finding his Schopenhauerian pessimism curiously congenial in these hard days." She remarks further that she has been reading John Halperin's 1982 Gissing biography with great interest and picks up on some errors such as that "Westbourne Grove is not in the West End." Charmed by Halperin's "attachment to his subject," as she continues to read the biography, and attracted by his assertion that "*Sleeping Fires* […] is one of the greatest short novels ever written," Drabble informs us somewhat coldbloodedly that "I am about to embark on *Sleeping Fires*, as soon as I have followed its author to his death at Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port."

The second mention occurs on the back page of the *TLS* where J. C. refers to the April issue of our *Journal*, and in particular to the erroneous news item in a Tasmanian newspaper from late December 1903 about Algernon's death. He then notes in Bouwe Postmus' feature on Algernon that he was especially popular Down Under, a fact that has surprised many Gissing scholars. He also comments on the various serialisations in England and New Zealand of his late novel *Hidden Fire*, which Algernon apparently was unable to publish in book form (how he would have taken delight in the Internet and especially the opportunities it offers to self-publish), and is left wondering "[d]id it make the surviving Gissing wealthy in a way that his brother never was? We would like Mr Postmus to tell us whatever he knows" (see "Recent Publications" below).

N.B.: It has been brought to my notice that the title of a review in the October 2019 issue, "The July 2019 Literary London Society Conference on 'Gissing, Clerkenwell, and Coustillas,'" by Tom Ue, was by accident wrongly given. It is important to clarify here that the Conference was not solely about Gissing, but should have included the word "Panel" in the title after the word "Conference." The July 2019 Conference itself went under the title "'Neighbours of Ours': Cities, Communities, Networks." I apologise for the mix-up (Ed.).

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Recent Publications

Volumes

George Gissing, *New Grub Street*, translated by Chiara Vatteroni. Roma: Fazi Editore, 2020. Revised edition. Pp. 574. ISBN 9788893254410. €20.00.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Rachel Bowlby, "Afterword," *Victoriographies*, 10:2 (2020), pp. 189-195.

J. C., "NB: O Brother," *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 April 2020, p. 36. J. C. writes about Algernon Gissing [see "Notes and News"].

Richard Dennis, "No Home-Like Place: Delusions of Home in *Born in Exile*," *Victoriographies*, 10:2 (2020), pp. 147-164.

Margaret Drabble, "Slow Time and Broad Horizons," *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 April 2020, p. 15.

Jason Finch, "The many-sided comedy of George Gissing's *The Nether World*" in Tommy Alho, Jason Finch, Roger D. Sell (eds)., *Renaissance Man: Essays on Literature and Culture for Anthony W. Johnson*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2019, pp. 173-196.

Constance Harsh, "The London Frame of Mind in *Born in Exile*," *Victoriographies*, 10:2 (2020), pp. 165-176.

Rebecca Hutcheon, "George Gissing: A Story of English Realism," *English Literature. Theories, Interpretations, Contexts*, Vol. 6 (December 2019), pp. 70-82.

Linda Mugglestone, "Gissing and the Auditory Imagination: Language, Identity, and Estrangement in *Born in Exile*," *Victoriographies*, 10:2 (2020), pp. 132-146.

Viola Papetti, "Gissing, l'artista al tempo del telegrafo," *Il Manifesto* (quotidiano comunista), 18 April 2020. Online edition. Book review of the recently reissued Italian translation of *New Grub Street* by Fazi Editore.

Jeremy Tambling, "Natural History in Gissing's *Born in Exile*," *Victoriographies*, 10:2 (2020), pp. 177-188.

Tom Ue, "Endless Circling, Perpetual Beginning: On *New Grub Street* by George Gissing" in *My Victorian Novel: Critical Essays in the Personal Voice*, eds. Annette R. Federico and Jane Tompkins (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2020), Chapter 12, pp. 231-246.

Tom Ue, "Godwin at a Crossroads," *Victoriographies*, 10:2 (2020), pp. 121-131.

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Tailpiece

[I include below a letter which George Charles Williamson sent to the editor of *Academy and Literature* shortly after Gissing's death. The letter was published in the journal on the 9 January 1904, p. 46. Williamson (1858-1942) was a once-renowned British art historian, convivial clubman, friend of the famous, and author of more than eighty books, who wrote an anonymous review praising *By the Ionian Sea* in 1901 and later briefly corresponded with Gissing in the last year of his life. In his 1921 book *Behind My Library Door*, he also mentions knowing Gissing soon after his first wife died, but they then lost sight of each other. Frank Woodman wrote a short article about Williamson for the July 1989 issue of *The Gissing Newsletter*, entitled "Dr. G. C. Williamson, Sympathetic Critic and Friend" in which he both observes that nothing is known about how and when they originally met and that they did have a few mutual friends who might have put them in touch with each other again such as Clement King Shorter and Mrs Louise M. Stacpoole Kenny (1864-1933), the Irish Catholic writer of numerous religious biographies, Gissing enthusiast, and sister of Henry de Vere Stacpoole the once-famed author of the bestselling exotic romance, *The Blue Lagoon*. Williamson is one of those many fleeting acquaintances Gissing never referred to in either his *Diary* or his *Letters*, people whom we

would never know about if they had not themselves made the effort both to preserve Gissing's letters to them and their memory of him in writing. In his will Williamson wrote that he wanted his "Diaries" to be archived in the British Library and not to be opened until fifty years after his death. Woodman in his article on Williamson mentions being told by the BL in 1989, upon enquiring about the "Diaries," that they had never received them. One can only hope that they will eventually surface at an auction. Ed.]

George Gissing

SIR,—May I have a short space in your columns in which to say a word or two respecting my late friend George Gissing? I find that the majority of writers who have mentioned him since his death refer to what they are pleased to term the monotony of his writings, repeating the old, worn-out statement that so wearied Gissing in his life. In one of his letters to me, dated February 23, 1903, he alludes to some words of mine respecting his "By the Ionian Sea," and his autobiography under the nom de plume of Henry Ryecroft, and he adds, "I should like to say that your estimate of my work as a whole seems to differ most refreshingly from that which is most often brought under my notice. After having been told by all manner of authorities, year after year, that the note of my writing is its depressing monotony, and that variety of subject and manner seem wholly beyond my reach, it is, I confess, encouraging to hear a different opinion, and one which my own heart tells me is a true one.

"I suppose the fact of the matter is that very few reviewers have read more than one or two of my books, and to those who like yourself keep a certain number of them in mind I am most grateful—all the more so that I must needs wonder how they do it and how you do it amid the press of writing which calls for their and your attention."

To these words may I add that no one who ever knew Gissing could honestly speak of monotony in his conversation or writing. He was an erudite man, well versed in classic lore, had the Latin historians and some of the Greek ones at his finger tips, and could read both languages easily when he cared to do so. He was a very shy and fastidious man, and was much troubled by adverse criticism, as he was peculiarly sensitive to it. He was almost morbid in many of his thoughts, and had a strange vein of romance running through his sad life. Into the details of his early career I do not care to enter. They were very hard and very cruel, and the learning which he accumulated was obtained at vast cost and through much suffering.

He was one of the kindest of men, one of those who would take any trouble to help another, especially if the man requiring help was a writer who was

striving to live by his pen, and to such an one his heart went out, and he aided him secretly and splendidly; asking no thanks in return. The memory of his own old days of hard struggle never left him and tinged the whole of his life, but it was seldom that his friends could get him to talk of those old sad days.

As a conversationalist he had few equals. His voice was a delightful one, full of charm and melody, and he loved to read aloud and to talk of nature, of flowers, and of mountains. He had few friends and few of them knew one another, as Gissing did not love to have many men about him, but to commune with one at a time and to admit but very few into the secret recesses of his heart. Of the country he had an ever-abiding and profound love, and in that connection let me quote from another of his letters, in which he says, "To live at Guildford, as you do, and to see Spring coming up over the heaths! Here (St. Jean de Luz) we have primroses and violets, yes, even hart's-tongue and spleenwort; but all these things on the slopes of the Pyrenees are not the same thing as to see them in a Surrey lane.

"Would that I could be with you and see lovely Surrey in all her maiden beauty again."

To those of us who knew Gissing, "The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft" are full of meaning. We can see him and hear him on every page of the book, and we know how his own life and his own love are pictured in that book. We would have wished that he had not been so much the Apostle of Pessimism, and yet that was more the result of his health than the state of his mind. He was really a very cheerful man, of a certain quaint lurking humour withal, and with an eager desire to gain health and to do still better work than he had ever done, and yet with a consciousness that in "Henry Ryecroft" he had done his last important work. It has proved that it was so, and to the great grief of his friends Gissing has left us, and has been called from the world—that at first so evilly treated him and afterwards so grudgingly gave him her praise—to a better sphere; one of which he often spoke, and where he would be able, as he said, "to rest and think and be happy," and where "surely there would be violets and birds, with the fruits of the willow and the tender green grass" to delight his wearied eyes.

There have been few simpler minds in the world, few who have had sweeter and simpler pleasures, few truer men, and few who have more longed for rest, and now the rest has come, and the world has hardly yet understood what she owes to George Gissing and to his books.—Yours, &c.,

The Mount, Guildford, GEORGE. C. WILLIAMSON.
January, 1904.

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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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