Volume LIV, Number 4
October 2020

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ISSN 0962-0443

The Gissing Journal

Volume LIV, Number 4, October 2020
"More than most men am I dependent on sympathy to bring out the best that is in me."
Commonplace Book

"Cold wet feet under a wet umbrella": Katherine Mansfield's Response to George Gissing

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One lonely weekend in May 1918, on the coast of Cornwall, Katherine Mansfield was amused to find George Gissing's *Eve's Ransom* along with *In a German Pension* in the "not quite bare" circulating library at Looe; in a letter to John Middleton Murry, she praises Gissing's character Eve despite reservations about the novel:

> Although, like all poor Gissings books its written with cold wet feet under a wet umbrella—I do feel that if his feet had been dry & the umbrella furled it would have been extremely good. As it is, the woman of the book is quite a little creation. The whole is badly put together, & there is so much which is entirely irrelevant—Hes very clumsy, very stiff and alas! poor wretch! almost all his 'richness' is eaten up by fogs, catarrh, Gower street, landladies with a suspicious eye, wet doorsteps, Euston Station. He must have had an infernal time.[1]

Gissing appears to be an ongoing topic of discussion between Mansfield and Murry. When she connects his lurid cityscapes with his unfortunate life, she echoes the generally held belief that Gissing's "wet feet," his struggle with poverty and misfortune, reinforced his dour outlook.[2] Mansfield reacts against Gissing's example in two striking ways. She explores with a modernist's confidence the vitality of sights and sounds of the city that Gissing often portrays as dreary and oppressive, and she rejects what she and other modernists saw as the excessively autobiographical tendency in Gissing's novels.

The misgivings she harboured about Gissing's outlook went along with an interest in his subjects, especially working women. In 1908, she wrote her own sympathetic portrait of a shopgirl, "The Tiredness of Rosabel." A decade later in Cornwall, when her priorities as a writer were well established, "a melancholy fit [was] on [her]," and she felt "utterly homeless, just uprooted as it were and tossed about on any old strange tide."[3] That is when she found pleasure in the story of Gissing's depressed bookkeeper Eve. Deprived of comforting companionship, Mansfield read Gissing's novel while preparing her next story. She likely experienced *Schadenfreude* as a reader, while as a

writer she sought a complex inspiration in vying with an author she found alternately clumsy and inspiring. In the neglected story "Carnation," which she wrote the day after she read *Eve's Ransom,* Mansfield carefully avoids the pitfalls she associates with Gissing, his excessive dreariness and his self-involved writing. Mansfield felt sympathy with Gissing's poverty and illness. She also experienced dread at the prospect that loneliness and chronic illness might entrap her in confessional writing.

This essay will begin with what was assumed by Mansfield's generation about Gissing's unstinting hardships in order to explain her pity for him, move to Mansfield's innovative portrait of an urban worker, contrasting her Rosabel with Gissing's working girls, and end with a fresh reading of Mansfield's "Carnation," a modernist story inspired in part by Gissing's *Eve's Ransom.* The aim is to show how Mansfield took an interest in Gissing's work and also took caution from Gissing's example. Readers of *The Gissing Journal* will recognise that Mansfield's generation lacked the advantage of materials such as Gissing's diary and letters which have since come to light and have challenged reductive representations of his life as unceasingly dismal.

The "Infernal Time" of George Gissing

It was well known in Mansfield's time that Gissing lost hope of a promising academic career when he was arrested at school for stealing in order to support a young streetwalker.[4] After a month in prison and a brief stint in the United States, Gissing married the young woman Nell, who returned to her former ways. It was also known that the writer sought a second wife outside his class. Edith was unstable and eventually died in a mental hospital. Early biographers give little or no attention to Gissing's final years nor to Gabrielle Fleury, an educated woman who was his French translator. Gissing lived with her and her mother in France until his death. This later period is distinguished by some of Gissing's most engaging work, which challenges the idea that he or his work was always morose.[5]

To Mansfield's generation, Gissing's name was a byword for derailed talent and authorial hardship. Although his books sold better than those of the unfortunate Edwin Reardon in his *New Grub Street*, like Reardon, Gissing wrote under strain. For Mansfield, Gissing embodies the melancholy she strives to resist in Cornwall, as she confesses to Murry that she feels "utterly homeless, just uprooted as it were and tossed about on any old strange tide."[6] How much Mansfield read about what Murry calls "the fearful catastrophe of Gissing's relations with women" and how much she gleaned from literary gossip is unclear.[7] She certainly knew of two books published in 1912, one by Frank Swinnerton, who never knew Gissing, and one by Morley Roberts, who

was Gissing's friend and recalled their conversations in detail.[8] As co-editor of *Rhythm,* she would have read H. G. Wells's review of both books in the *Rhythm Literary Supplement*. Wells credits Swinnerton with a clear portrayal of Gissing: "I see again as I read this scholarly, intellectual, unhappy, weakly dignified and intensely pathetic being as I knew him in his life."[9] Wells calls Morley Roberts's book "scandal and scandal merely." Roberts's portrait is intimate and stresses his own role in the crucial episode at Owens College: "I did my best to get Maitland [Gissing] to give up this girl [Nell]."[10] Middleton Murry relies on Roberts for a sympathetic account of Gissing's troubles.[11]

Unlike Roberts, who writes with fondness, Swinnerton writes with harsh detachment about Gissing's self-absorption, "the rather querulous, random self-expression of the serious egoist."[12] Swinnerton belittles Gissing's observation of the poor: "[Gissing]" emphasises dirty finger-nails, unwashedness, perspiration — in a way that is feminine in its extravagance."[13] Mansfield's qualified admiration for Gissing contrasts with Swinnerton's critique though she is less inclined than Murry to romanticise Gissing as a literary martyr, the "Manchester Raskolnikov."[14] Her version of Gissing is tinged with her customary irony. Her words "alas! poor wretch!" recall Pandarus's address to Shakespeare's Cressida,[15] stressing Gissing's role as duped victim of the "melancholy trade."[16]

Furling the Wet Umbrella

Early in her writing career, Mansfield qualifies Gissing's gloomy view of city life in "The Tiredness of Rosabel" (1908).[17] The working girl Rosabel does encounter fog and grime; she has "horribly wet feet" and a skirt and petticoat "coated with black, greasy mud."[18] However, Rosabel's long bus ride with the "sickening smell of warm humanity" is relieved by London's nocturnal beauty: "the street was blurred and misty, […] light striking on the panes turned their dullness to opal and silver and the jewellers' shops, seen through this, were fairy palaces."[19] Comparison of shops to "fairy palaces" gives the first inkling of Rosabel's involved fantasy life. Street lamps enchant her route: "even the hansoms were like gondolas dodging up and down, and the lights trailing luridly."[20] This use of "luridly" recalls Gissing's many "lurid" nocturnes.[21] However, Rosabel's evocation of Venice adds a light-hearted, playful quality, "tongues of flame licking" and "magic fish swimming."[22] As one critic says of Mansfield's heroines, "The City awakens their dreaming personalities."[23]

Rosabel's ride overlooks a landscape of privilege. Her working hours involve boundary crossing when a customer has her try on a hat. The woman's escort, Harry, demands a fashionable black hat with a plume for his striking red-haired companion, "eyes the colour of that green ribbon shot

with gold they had got from Paris last week."[24] Rosabel recalls her new stock; she must run to the storeroom, "breathlessly, cut the cords, scatter the tissue paper, and yes, there was the very hat—rather large, soft, with a great, curled feather, and a black velvet rose, nothing else."[25] Rosabel is a formidable salesgirl with an urgency to sell: the special hat conforms to her customer's taste, the plume, an imperial reminder of charismatic mega-fauna, set off by a single artificial rose. Rosabel herself could never afford such a hat, but she fulfills her customer's desire with vicarious passion.

In Gissing's *Thyrza*, hats abound, but they are not endowed with the thrill of Rosabel's wares. Hats can function as signs of bravery in the face of struggle. A young woman steps forward in a Lambeth pub to sing of "May-bloom and of love that had never come near her" wearing "an ugly-shaped hat, with a gruesome green feather" that dramatises her separation from the natural season she celebrates. The singer is "one of those fated toilers to struggle on as long as any one would employ her, then to fall away, among the forgotten wretched."[26] Gissing notes "a small straw hat of the brimless kind" on Thyrza's unconventional friend, Totty Nancarrow: she lives alone despite her uncle's offer to take her in and educate her.[27] Her solitary life threatens traditional women like Lydia, who distrusts the minimally-hatted Totty. Thyrza and her sister Lydia are not eager shopgirls but poorly paid finishers at a hat factory.

Like Mansfield, Gissing is sensitive to the working girl's vexed relation to consumer goods around her, yet the draper's shop assistant Monica Madden in *The Odd Women* lacks knowledge equivalent to Rosabel's awareness of her stock. In fact, the novel suggests Monica's indifference is a virtue; one critic observes, "Monica walking the city does not express a flame of motivating envy."[28] Once married, Monica chooses dresses, yet she resists her husband's flattery as though he is trying to instil in her an excessive desire for things: "You are making a butterfly of me."[29] In contrast, Mansfield's shopgirl openly lusts after things. By buying "[a]t the corner of the Oxford Circus [...] the bunch of violets,"[30] while skimping on her tea, Rosabel manifests "the union of desire with things."[31] Of course, Rosabel soon regrets her weakness for violets, imagining a rich dinner she will not have, "roast duck and green peas, chestnut stuffing, pudding with brandy sauce."[32]

Rosabel's appetite signals a vital woman. She boards her bus in a risky fashion: "she swung on to the step of the Atlas 'bus, grabbed her skirt with one hand, and clung to the railing with the other."[33] On the bus, she disapproves of vulgarity in another young woman who consumes the popular novel *Anna Lombard*, "licking her first finger and thumb each time that she turned the page."[34] Despite her reaction to the reader, Rosabel retains a passage she sees in that novel, "something about a hot, voluptuous night, a

band playing, and a girl with lovely white shoulders."[35] Later, in fantasy, she admires "her [own] lovely white shoulders" and the adornments to set them off: "her beautiful, shining dress spread on the bed—white tulle over silver, silver shoes, silver scarf, a little silver fan."[36] The materials recall the dazzling shop windows she has passed on her route to a cold bedsit.

Rosabel's day at work has revealed her feisty temper. Modelling the hat provokes a flame of envy, "[a] sudden ridiculous feeling of anger": "She longed to throw the lovely, perishable thing in the girl's face and bent over the hat, flushing."[37] The customer may think she has flattered Rosabel, "[i]t suits you beautifully," but she has insulted her with the assumption that a meek shopgirl, used as a mannikin, poses no threat: "Oh, Harry, isn't it adorable! [...] I must have that."[38] In Rosabel's revenge fantasy, she takes the pampered girl's place: she revisits and transforms Harry's trifling with her at the counter to the courtliness of a Prince Charming who brings "great sprays of Parma violets" and "[fills] her hands with them."[39] The young man's hands from the shop no longer suggest a sordid transaction as when he flattered her "pretty little figure": "he leant over her as she made out the bill, as he counted the money into her hand."[40] Instead, Rosabel fantasises her own marriage to him.

Marriage or prostitution are the only avenues of escape in the typical shopgirl plot. Gissing maintains the binary in *The Odd Women* by providing an obvious foil to Monica in a fallen co-worker.[41] Mansfield offers no fallen counterpart; instead, she captures a single day in the life of a woman "shopping" for her future amidst a swirl of enticements. Rosabel herself laughs out loud at her well-stocked fantasy, which mixes up domestic cliché and romance: "tea at the 'Cottage,'" "The fire [...] lighted in her boudoir," and aristocratic marriage at an "ancestral home."[42] To borrow Mansfield's later terms, Rosabel is "quite a little creation" brought to life vividly by her eclectic fantasy, inspired by the metropolis, a place of opportunity and endless yearning for "Sugar? Milk? Cream?"[43] Rosabel's fantasy of replacing the upper-class female is naïve; however, the real Rosabel is more than a passive victim. She puts in long hours in the shop, but her "tiredness" is as much from over-stimulated desire as physical exhaustion.

Antony Alpers credits "The Tiredness of Rosabel" as a breakthrough story for its early use of Mansfield's "method of oblique impersonation": "she is outside the event and yet she isn't."[44] It should also be saluted as a breakaway from the social problem story which focuses on the exploitation of the fated toiler.[45] The story of Rosabel does play off the view of investigator and popular novelist Clementina Black, that the greatest danger to shop assistants is not sexual vulnerability but "dullness" and "the passion for money."[46] However, Rosabel shares in the passion for expensive things as a relief from boredom

and a source of erotic pleasure. In "The Tiredness of Rosabel," Mansfield offers a convincing portrait of a girl dreaming of consumer transcendence waking with a smile and "a little nervous tremor round her mouth."[47]

In creating a shopgirl, Mansfield rises above the instrumental demonstration of a social problem and anticipates her mature artistic credo. She later objects to artists focused on problems and blames the whole literary culture in a letter to artist Dorothy Brett: "The 'problem' is the invention of the 19th Century. The [real] artist takes a *long look* at life. He says softly, 'So this is what life is, is it?' And he proceeds to express that. All the rest he leaves."[48]

She does not name Gissing in her condemnation of problem writing. After all, his so-called problem novels, including *The Unclassed* and *The Odd Women,* do not offer pat solutions for the social problems they present. In fact, one of Gissing's great generative impulses was his scepticism about the social reformers of his time played out as early as *Demos* (1886) with its jaundiced view of socialism. As he matured, he became less enamoured of problems as starting points. Had Mansfield focused on his late work and his letters, she might have found an ally in Gissing, someone with reservations about problem-centered fiction.[49] However, she would still have challenged what she saw as his self-obsessed pessimism.

Dissolving the Self to Achieve a "Creation"

Gissing served as a provocative example because he illustrated a tendency Mansfield anathematised, personal confession at the expense of detached truthfulness. This observation might be paired with Melinda Harvey's insight that Mansfield strives to achieve an "extinction of or a dissolution of the self": in following Chekhov, she aims to become "a 'true' rather than 'a false writer'";[50] Mansfield wished to "disappear" from her stories.[51] Her enthusiasm for Gissing's character Eve as "quite a little creation" can also be glossed with a letter to Hugh Walpole where Mansfield again uses the term "creation" approvingly for fiction that achieves a life independent of its author. Walpole had written to object to her review of his novel *The Captives* (1920), and Mansfield wrote back:

> your peculiar persistent consciousness of what you wanted to do was what seemed to me to prevent your book from being a creation […] You seemed to lose in passion what you gained in sincerity and therefore 'the miracle' didn't happen. I mean the moment when the act of creation takes place—the mysterious change when you are no longer writing the book—IT is writing, IT possesses you.[52]

When Mansfield describes Eve in 1918 as "a creation" she suggests "the miracle" did happen. With Walpole again she applauds the "desire to escape from autobiography," adding "there is a profound distinction between any

kind of *confession* and creative work."[53] Virginia Woolf makes a similar point regarding Gissing: "[he] is one of those imperfect novelists through whose books one sees the life of the artist faintly covered by the lives of fictitious people."[54] It is likely Woolf and Mansfield discussed the self-absorption apparent to them in Gissing's works.[55]

When Mansfield writes to Ottoline Morrell in October 1918, she refers lightheartedly to Gissing to convey the bathos of her window view in Hampstead: "There is a vine outside my windows & all the little grapes are purple & down below in the yard a lady is pegging a pair of gents. woven underpants […] Gissing in Italy—it looks to me[…]."[56] She recalls Gissing's travel book *By the Ionian Sea: Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy* and his encounter with "the cosmopolitan vulgarity which has usurped the place."[57] In glossing this letter, Vincent O'Sullivan calls Gissing a "touchstone for shabbiness,"[58] but Mansfield credits Gissing with more variety: Gissing's travels in Italy are both funny and self-satiric, as Mansfield is in the letter. Her appreciation appears subtler than some of Murry's elaborate praise. In his long essay on Gissing, he extols Gissing's memorable portraits of women: "the ideal, the ambiguous, the sinister—all are alive, and all are thought-provoking,"[59] but even as he borrows from Mansfield's merry phrase for one of the heroines, "really something of a creation,"[60] he, like most of his contemporaries, harps on the trials of Gissing. His epithet, "this Manchester Raskolnikov," hearkens back to the tale of Nell, and fixes Gissing as a martyr whose suffering offers a quasi-religious insight into the Sonjas of the world and into the complexity of women.

Gissing's Eve

Mansfield was indebted to her encounter with *Eve's Ransom.* It fuelled the story "Carnation" written in Looe in the days after Mansfield's reading of Gissing.[61] His character Eve embodies Murry's claims about Gissing's women. She is indeed "ambiguous" and "thought-provoking." The novel's hero falls for an unwitting temptress after he sees Eve's "half-sad, half-smiling" photo in his landlady's album, and when in London, he tracks her down.[62] She is too elegant and self-possessed to fit his idea of a provincial girl adrift in the city; neither does she fit the mould of the typical shopgirl like her "she-Cockney" friend Patty who becomes Hilliard's informant. Eve is well-read as she frequents libraries. Having lost her job as a bookkeeper, she walks the city in search of work, yet she also squanders money on cabs and is suspiciously well-dressed.[63] The delay in explaining her resources makes Hilliard and the reader complicit in hasty assumptions more often made by suspicious landladies.

A sum of £400, unexpectedly paid to Hilliard by his late father's creditor, allows him to rescue Eve from an unhappy love affair in London and take

her to his artistic Mecca. Autumn in Paris is curative: "I was never so well in my life," Eve avows.[64] The sights and sounds of Paris reflect a healthy transformation: "The boulevard glowed in a golden light of sunset; the sound of its traffic was subdued to a lulling rhythm."[65] Eve realises her dream of speaking French fluently while Hilliard benefits from a side trip to Switzerland, arranged by his friend Narramore, who guides Hilliard to contacts that will soon allow him to train as an architect.

Eve remains bound to Hilliard by gratitude and not by love. He tries to accept her lack of commitment and enjoy the moment: "The very best of a lifetime may come within a single day."[66] In Paris, Eve prefers the company of the woman who taught her French, but Hilliard is too besotted to let go of his fantasy woman. *Eve's Ransom* recalls Wilde's *Dorian Gray*: both novels punish an aesthete who mistakes a person for his ideal, but unlike the artist Basil Hallward, Gissing's Hilliard suffers no violent comeuppance. He makes a classic blunder, however. As his money runs out, he talks up Narramore, whose success in business offers the security Eve seeks. Eve reiterates that her attachment to Hilliard was never based on love. Her moral position is truly ambiguous. Never having returned his love, Eve cannot exactly be said to betray Hilliard, nor does she simply prostitute herself to Narramore in exchange for a comfortable life. In fact, she finds his casual ways quite agreeable after the weighty expectations of Hilliard.

At the end, a rejected Hilliard is consoled by Eve's improved circumstances; he also recognises that he has himself avoided a doomed marriage.[67] Through Narramore's intercession, he has escaped monotonous work, which had driven him to drink and to contemplate suicide. While there are echoes of Gissing's own melancholy life story throughout the crusade to rescue Eve, the hero's escape to a dream job without marital obligation might justify Mansfield's objection that the novel is "badly put together" and loaded with revealing wish-fulfilment from the author. Mansfield is also correct that the sometimes clumsy plot does not negate Eve's fascination. Her carefully masked intentions, while refusing to fulfil Hilliard's claims on her affection, make the novel complex and convincing. That she prefers a secure life, where she might pursue her reading and her fondness for French, lends her the quality of New Woman Siren.

Gissing is particularly skilful in depicting intelligent women pressed by men. In this regard, *Eve's Ransom* resembles *New Grub Street,* where Amy Reardon and her writer husband often end their conflicts in stalemate, Amy refusing to concede to her husband's view of herself as mercenary and him as martyr.[68] In the end, Amy does not escape the heart-rending experience of her husband's return to see her in his dying days. Eve, on the other hand,

remains emotionally removed from Hilliard's onslaught, aside from a few bouts of headache. She is humbly apologetic but certain of her choice as she prefers to sidestep the acknowledged debt to Hilliard. A reader is reminded of the subtle and surprising way Mansfield treats women in ambiguous or compromised relationships with men in her stories. Linda Burnell in "Prelude" accepts an ambivalent relation to her impervious husband Stanley whom she sometimes hates; the musical Miss Ada Moss, in order to survive in the city, accepts the untoward advances of the "stout gentleman" who likes his women "firm and well covered."[69]

Mansfield's Curious Eve

Fresh from reading *Eve's Ransom,* Mansfield brought to her new story "Carnation" a resolve to reinforce her modernism, especially the desire to avoid retelling a scene from her life in a confessional way. When praising the "richness" of Gissing's work, she might not only be referring to Gissing's prose, she might also be responding to memorable scenes that rise above the confessional, though she does not specify any.[70] In her review of John Galsworthy's *To Let*, it appears Mansfield did relish the enchantment of scenes from novels she would not call "great," and she was willing to endure some "*longueur*" in order to discover them.[71] She chides her contemporaries who lack the endurance for Galsworthy's novels. In a day when "books are snatched at, glanced at, dipped into rather than read," she hopes "someone will discover how rich, how satisfying, how powerful" Galsworthy's "family portraits" are.[72] Writing to Galsworthy, she describes her fondness for a final scene*:* "All the life of that house flickers up, trembles, glows again, is rich again in these last moments. And then there is Soames with Fleur running out of his bosom."[73] Her tribute to unforgettable moments with the Forsyte family shows a willingness to honour past writers while maintaining her own modernist aesthetic with its resistance to the "plotty," a term she reviles when a jejune editor suggests Mansfield's stories could use more plot.[74]

Mansfield's story "Carnation" is hardly an obvious imitation of Gissing, but a minimally-plotted modernist scene that conveys rich enchantment. The influence of Gissing is subtle and indirect, a jumping off point. Mansfield's "Carnation" begins in a hot, stuffy London classroom during a French lesson. It is derived from Mansfield's time at Queens College, but it is far too rendered, the authorial self too thoroughly dissolved to be called "confessional."[75] An advanced schoolgirl Eve dominates adolescent Katie, teasing her with a flower: "curious Eve," as she is called, likes to eat flower petals, but on this one day she brings a carnation, "a deep, deep red one, that looked as though it had been dipped in wine and left in the dark to dry."[76] After announcing the

premise, "[o]n those hot days Eve—curious Eve—always carried a flower," the second sentence plays with a tapping rhythm through repetition of "it," eight times, to convey Eve's casual, sensual way with the flower: "She snuffed it and snuffed it, twirled it in her fingers, laid it against her cheek, held it to her lips, tickled Katie's neck with it, and ended finally, by pulling it to pieces and eating it, petal by petal."[77] The repetition of "it" suggests the forward motion of a story writing itself, invoking a power that goes beyond an author's "persistent consciousness," as Mansfield described to Walpole: "IT is writing, IT possesses you." Later, the repeated "it" refers to the variations in the teacher's reading: "it ebbed, it grew soft […] it was funny, […] it made you feel uncomfortable"[78] and again to describe the stimulation of the carnation's scent: "Oh, the scent! It floated across to Katie. It was too much."[79]

Flowers are de-familiarised by Eve's curious appetite. Her claim for the flavour of carnations remains unutterable: "They taste like—like—ah, well!"[80] In Katie's vivid imagination, Eve's curious presence lends animation to the cloakroom with its "strange decoration of flowery hats on the pegs behind her."[81] These hats do not resemble the sad green hat of Gissing's fated toiler nor the plumed creation at Rosabel's shop. In response to Eve's laughter, things, including hats, come dangerously to life: And "away her little thin laugh flew, fluttering among those huge, strange flower heads on the wall behind her."[82] Unnerved by Eve's laugh, Katie conjures an image recalling the most uncanny Victorian ladies' hats, which featured whole birds: "It had a sharp beak and claws and two bead eyes, thought fanciful Katie."[83]

In the stifling heat of the classroom, "there was not a breath from the dazzle outside," M. Hugo abandons lessons and reads French poetry aloud; the appearance of his small volume causes most of the girls to groan and put their heads down. Eve, however, responds by "kissing the languid carnation" and saying: "Courage, my pet."[84] Not just her knowledge of French but her worldliness exceeds that of her classmates whose ordinariness is indicated by their indistinguishable flowered hats. As the teacher reads, Katie uneasily observes Eve's passionate trance, "her eyes half veiled and a smile that was like the shadow of her cruel laugh." In her knowledge of French and her unexpected smile, there is a trace of the original mystery of *Eve's Ransom* when Hilliard is entranced by the photo of Eve.

However, Katie does not regard the sensual Eve as an ideal. Rather, Katie intentionally turns away from Eve's image to the window where she discovers a hypnotic scene, a driver whistling and washing a carriage wheel and his horse's legs to the rhythmic sound of the pump, "his sleeves rolled up, his chest bare, all splashed with water."[85] The repeated sound of the pump: "Hoo-hor-her. Hoo-hor-her" merges with the teacher's voice, which begins "to warm, to

deepen."[86] The fragrance of Eve's carnation drowns Katie's already strained senses, until her experience becomes "one great rushing rising, triumphant thing" sending "the whole room into pieces."[87] Intuiting the change in Katie, Eve raffishly "pop[s] the carnation down the front of Katie's blouse" with a final phrase, "*Souvenir tendre*," tender memory or memento of love.[88] Mansfield's readers may connect Eve's sensuality with the suggestiveness of her early story "Leves Amores"; "Carnation" can be read as an artistic awakening, beginning with the self-dramatising Eve, a *belle dame sans merci*, and moving to Katie's discovery of aesthetic pleasure which embraces the sounds of the street. Voluptuous Eve and the sounds of French poetry are agents of change bringing Katie to a full modernist appreciation of sensory life on the city street and "the transcendent significance of the ordinary."[89]

The uplifting sounds and images make an interesting contrast to the hellish and harshly rhythmic accounts of Gissing's industrial city. As Hilliard leaves his life of toil, he celebrates a sense that "fate would never draw him back again into this circle of fiery torments."[90] There are many harsh images and sounds of the city in *Eve's Ransom*, but in a particularly rich opening passage, Gissing's sound effects contrast with the images and mechanical sounds perceived by Mansfield's Katie outside her classroom. Even with the harshness, there is a distinctive music:

> [At Dudley Port, the] lamps, just lighted, cast upon wet wood and metal a pale yellow shimmer; voices sounded with peculiar clearness; so did the rumble of a porter's barrow laden with luggage. From a foundry hard by came the muffled, rhythmic thunder of mighty blows; this and the long note of an engine-whistle wailing far off seemed to intensify the stillness of the air as gloomy day passed into gloomier night.[91]

Like Mansfield's prose, Gissing's diction with his "rhythmic thunder" includes a modernist potential that rises to poetry. The artful repetition and alliteration of Dudley portends, for his characters, a harsh struggle. While the industrial rhythm and the far off "wailing" whistle signal spiritual death, Gissing makes an inspiring music of the thing he criticises. Hilliard's feet have little chance to dry as he waits for a tram: "No rain was falling, but the streets shone wet and muddy under lurid lamp-lights. Just above the house-tops appeared the full moon, a reddish disk, blurred athwart floating vapour."[92]

Impatient with Gissing's "cold, wet feet under a wet umbrella," Mansfield goes out of her way to rehabilitate urban images, previously exploited for their melancholy, in her depiction of the city's life-affirming rhythm. Young Katie's view is expansive and triumphant. Because of its novelty, Mansfield worried over the reception of this story by the editor of *The Nation.* She knew Murry would completely "understand" it and appreciate what she meant to be "delicate."[93] Murry, of all people, would have been sensitive to the significance

of Mansfield's elevation of urban rhythm in the story. As he writes in *Rhythm,* "[Modernism] penetrates beneath the outward surface of the world, and disengages the rhythms that lie at the heart of things."[94] *The Nation*'s editor, Mansfield worries, might not share such insight: she writes, "I know he would hate my mind."[95] A traditionalist demanding a fixed narrative point of view might indeed balk at the depiction of the way underlying rhythms come together: street sounds and French poetry operate in a shared subjectivity. When Eve utters, "Courage, dear," she might be addressing herself and the "languid carnation" as well as Katie and even perhaps M. Hugo. The shared experience of rhythm by Eve, the teacher, and Katie is heightened when it is set against the aggregate dullness of the other students who appear bewitched by its Circe-like power: "All of them lolled and gaped, staring at the round clock, which seemed to have grown paler, too; the hands scarcely crawled."[96] Despite initially feeling "queer" and ashamed for the teacher whom the others call "old Hugo-Wugo," Katie finds time altered, and her experience unexpectedly rich.[97]

Writing to Dorothy Brett, Mansfield diminishes her ambition in the story, calling the "Carnation" a "teeny little study […] just a sort of glimpse of adolescent emotion."[98] That modesty is coy. Because it is a successful experiment in fiction, it is hard to see why "Carnation" was not included in a collection in her lifetime. Perhaps, because of the sexual suggestiveness of Eve's floral appetite and Katie's orgasmic epiphany, it could be too easily reduced to a coming-of-age story or Mansfield's confession of schoolgirl initiation. However, looking back on the work, we can see how it is a seminal story, experimenting with the inter-subjective narrative voices also found in Woolf's "Kew Gardens" and Mansfield's longer stories "Prelude" and "Bliss," where the highly imaginative characters, Kezia and Bertha, range around the mental space of other characters and objects, undermining traditional assumptions about narrative point of view and individual identity.

To return to Gissing, Mansfield seems to be vying with him through her "creation" of a different Eve. The story is based on her life, as she explained to Ida Baker, but it transcends autobiography.[99] She had just read *Eve's Ransom* in which the title associates the character with the biblical Eve. Gissing shows a fallen world where Hilliard fantasises he can ransom Eve. The self-styled redeemer fails to credit the irresistible forces of modern life, especially Eve's need for money. The mythical association of Eve in "Carnation" pulls in a different direction. Mansfield depicts "curious Eve," redolent of *fin-de-siècle* decadence, promoting exploration of the Garden. In spite of her initial fear of Eve, the nascent artist Katie finds a new awareness that encompasses the rich rhythm all around her, leaving her with the *souvenir*

tendre of a modernist Eden. In "Carnation" Mansfield coaxes the city of fiction away from the spectacle of lurid streets, where youthful optimism is defeated, to the heat and light of a future artist's classroom, alive with rhythm, overlooking the city and celebrating its generative mix of sights and sounds.

[1] Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott (eds), *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield: Volume 2: 1918-September 1919* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987), pp. 195-196. Mansfield consistently omits apostrophes.

[2] Mansfield pities Gissing but does not consider his pessimism as a philosophical position in the tradition of Schopenhauer as Gissing might have wished.

[3] *Letters* 2, 195.

[4] Lacking dormitories, Owens College students were obliged to room on undesirable streets. As Morley Roberts quotes Gissing: "'It was a cruel and most undesirable thing that I, at the age of sixteen, should have been turned loose in a big city, compelled to live alone in lodgings, with nobody interested in me but those at the college'" in *The Private Life of Henry Maitland* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1912), p. 25.

[5] *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* with its sanguine narrator defies the idea that Gissing's writing is incurably dreary. I cannot say how much of Gissing's fiction KM read beyond *Eve's Ransom.* Murry discusses most of Gissing's novels, though not his short stories in the long essay published posthumously. J. Middleton Murry, "George Gissing" in *Katherine Mansfield & Other Literary Studies* (London: Constable, 1959), pp. 1-68.

[6] *Letters* 2, p. 196.

[7] Murry, "George Gissing," pp. 3-12.

[8] Frank Swinnerton, *George Gissing: A Critical Study* (London: Martin Secker, 1912), and Morley Roberts's *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*, the thinly disguised portrait of Gissing.

[9] H. G. Wells, "The Truth about Gissing," *Rhythm Literary Supplement,* December 1912, pp. i-iv *(*p. i).

[10] Roberts, *The Private Life,* pp. 24-25.

[11] Murry, "George Gissing," pp. 4-12.

[12] Frank Swinnerton, *George Gissing: A Critical Study,* p. 43.

[13] Swinnerton, p. 53.

[14] Murry, "George Gissing," p. 6.

[15] Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, Act 4, sc. 2, l. 31.

[16] Morley Roberts describes in this way Nell's return to prostitution, *The Private Life,* p. 41.

[17] It should be added that lively scenes and sprightly characters in *The Town Traveller* and *In the Year of Jubilee* contrast with Gissing's portrayals of oppressive city life and add to the variety of Gissing's cityscapes. Scott McCracken objects that critics have ignored "the phantasmagoric in his texts." Cited from "Between Dreamworlds and Real Worlds: Gissing's London" in John Spiers (ed.), *Gissing and the City* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 86-99 (pp. 86-87).

[18] *The Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield, Volume One: The Collected Fiction of Katherine Mansfield, 1898-1915*, eds. Gerri Kimber and Vincent O' Sullivan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2012), p. 133. [19] *Ibid*.

[20] CW1, p. 134.

[21] Gissing follows the Latin *luridus* or pale yellow. Sometimes he follows *luroris,* connoting ghastliness. Fog intensifies the eerie setting of Lambeth Walk: "Lamps were mere lurid blotches in the foul air perceptible only when close at hand; the footfall of invisible men

and women hurrying to factories made a ghastly sound" in George Gissing (1887), *Thyrza,* ed. Jacob Korg (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1984), p. 108.

[22] CW1, p. 134.

[23] Ana Belen Lopez Perez writes about Rosabel and Rosemary Fell in "A Cup of Tea." See Janet Wilson *et al* (eds), "A City of One's Own" in *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Modernism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), pp. 128-138 (p. 135).

[24] CW1, p. 134. [25] CW1, p. 135.

[26] Gissing, *Thyrza*, pp. 42-43. [27] Gissing, *Thyrza,* p. 39.

[28] Adrienne Munich, "Knowing Shopgirls: Monica Madden and Gissing's Refusal" in Christine Huguet and Simon J. James (eds), *George Gissing and the Woman Question: Convention and Dissent* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 144-154 (p. 154).

[29] George Gissing (1893), *The Odd Women* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1977), p. 151.

[30] CW1, p. 133.

[31] Munich, "Knowing Shopgirls," p. 154.

[32] CW1, p. 133. [33] *Ibid*. [34] *Ibid*. [35] *Ibid*. [36] CW1, p. 136. [37] CW1, p. 135. [38] *Ibid*. [39] CW1, p. 136. [40] *Ibid*.

[41] Elizabeth F. Evans, *Threshold Modernism: New Public Women and the Literary Spaces of Imperial London* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2019), pp. 74-75. Evans calls "The Tiredness of Rosabel" the "afterlife" of the standard plot, "increasingly subject to irony," p. 84.

[42] CW1, pp. 136-137. [43] CW1, p. 136.

[44] Anthony Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield* (New York: Viking Press, 1982), p. 191.

[45] To illustrate the shopgirl's long hours, Clementina Black points to "an admirable vignette in Gissing's *The Odd Women*." See *Sweated Industry and the Minimum Wage* (London: Duckworth, 1907), p. 72.

[46] Black, *Sweated Industry,* p. 73.

[47] CW1, p. 137.

[48] Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott(eds), *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield: Volume 4: 1920-1921* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), p. 317.

[49] In 1894, Gissing distanced himself from *The Unclassed*: "[The author] is a relative of mine, who died long ago" in *The Letters of George Gissing to Eduard Bertz,* ed. Arthur C. Young (London: Constable, 1961), p. 191.

[50] Melinda Harvey, "'God forgive me, Tchehov, for my impertinence': Mansfield and the Art of Copying" in Sarah Ailwood and Melinda Harvey (eds), *Katherine Mansfield and Literary Influence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2015), pp. 119-136 (p. 130).

[51] Harvey, "Mansfield and the Art of Copying," p. 130.

[52] *Letters* 4, p. 86. [53] *Letters* 4, p. 87.

[54] Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader: Second Series,* ed. Andrew McNeillie (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1986), p. 220.

[55] Like Mansfield, Woolf lists Gissing's preoccupations: "fog and four-wheelers, of slatternly landladies, of struggling men of letters, of gnawing domestic misery, of gloomy back streets and ignoble yellow chapels" in *The Common Reader: Second Series,* p. 220. Cf. Mansfield's list on the first page of this article.

[56] *Letters* 2, p. 279.

[57] George Gissing (1901), *By the Ionian Sea: Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy,* (Marlboro, VT: The Marlboro Press, 1991), pp. 2-3. Gissing follows up the squalor of Squillace with emphasis on the dignity of many people he meets. His account is funny and uplifting (pp. 111-143).

[58] *Letters* 2, p. 280.

[59] J. Middleton Murry, "George Gissing" in *Katherine Mansfield*, pp. 3-68 (p. 25).

[60] "Polly Sparkes [in *The Town Traveller*] is really something of a creation" in Murry, "George Gissing," p. 55.

[61] The manuscript is dated 27 May 1918.

[62] On Gissing's debt to Pater, see Adeline R. Tintner, "Eve Madeley: Gissing's Mona Lisa," *Gissing Newsletter*, 17:1 (January 1981), pp. 1-8.

[63] Eve earned a reward innocently for finding stolen letters. She delays explaining the affair that weighs on her: the gentleman is married but Eve does not know until his shrewish wife threatens her.

[64] George Gissing (1895), *Eve's Ransom* in *Three Novellas*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Grayswood, Surrey: Grayswood Press, 2011), p. 87.

[65] *Eve's Ransom,* p. 86. [66] *Ibid.,* p. 56.

[67] In *Eve's Ransom,* no one dies of starvation, consumption, nor suicide. Earlier novels by Gissing are more pessimistic about marriage and careers.

[68] In *The Odd Women* Everard Barfoot tries to trap Rhoda Nunn in her feminist principles when he wants her to live with him in a free union.

[69] Katherine Mansfield, "Pictures" in Gerri Kimber and Vincent O' Sullivan (eds), *The Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield, Volume Two: The Collected Fiction of Katherine Mansfield, 1916-1922* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2012), p. 185.

[70] On the sophistication of Gissing's prose, Morley Roberts writes, "Not even Farrar, in his 'Greek Syntax,' or some greater men, knew more examples of chiasmus, asyndeton, or hendiadys" in *The Private Life,* p. 86.

[71] Gerri Kimber, Angela Smith, and Anna Plumridge (eds), *The Collected Works of Katherine Mansfield, Volume Three: The Poetry and Critical Writings of Katherine Mansfield* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2014), p. 720.

[72] *Ibid*.

[73] *Letters,* 4, p. 305.

[74] "I ate such a stupid man with my tea—I can't digest him. He is bringing out an anthology of short stories and he said the more 'plotty' a story I can give him the better" in *Letters,* 4, p. 311.

[75] Mansfield mentions the story to Ida Baker saying it is "about College: I've even put you in as Connie Baker!" in *Letters* 2, p. 218.

[76] CW2, p. 160. [77] *Ibid*., [78] *Ibid.*, p. 161. [79] *Ibid.*, p. 162.[80] *Ibid.*, p. 160. [81] *Ibid*., [82] *Ibid*., [83] *Ibid*., [84] *Ibid*., p. 161. [85] *Ibid.*, p. 162. [86] *Ibid*., [87] *Ibid*., [88] *Ibid*.

[89] Helen Rydstrand, *Rhythmic Modernism: Mimesis and the Short Story* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019), p. 190.

[90] *Eve's Ransom*, p. 25. [91] *Ibid.*, p. 3. [92] *Ibid.,* p. 9.

[93] *Letters* 2, p. 203.

[94] Middleton Murry, *Art and Philosophy,* pp. 9-12, (p. 12).

[95] "Massingham wont print 'Carnation'" in *Letters* 2*,* p. 218. He does print it in *The Nation*, 7 September 1918.

[96] CW2, p. 161.

[97] *Ibid*.

[98] *Letters* 2, p. 260.

[99] *Ibid.*, p. 218.

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Thomas Waller Gissing and the Wakefield Bribers

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The one reference in Gissing criticism that I have come across to the repeated, widespread, and scandalous electoral corruption in the borough of Wakefield during the 1850s and 1860s, is to be found in Clifford Brook's "Historical and Topographical Notes" included in Pierre Coustillas's edition of *A Life's Morning*. Apropos of Mr Baxendale's political aspirations, Brook made the following point:

> Parliamentary elections in Wakefield were notoriously corrupt and many results were challenged, three successfully. After the 1865 election at which the Liberal candidate had won the seat there was a government enquiry; T. W. Gissing and R. B. Mackie were named amongst the ten Liberals who had chosen the candidate and organised his campaign.[1]

In an earlier contribution to *The Gissing Newsletter* Brook had pointed out that certain scenes in *Denzil Quarrier*, describing the parliamentary election "could have been based on Gissing's childhood memories […] or what he learnt from his father of the election campaign in Wakefield in 1865," as the latter was "involved in the inner councils of the Liberal Party's organisation during that election."[2] The successful Liberal candidate who won the Wakefield seat in 1865 with a majority of fifty over his Tory opponent, was William Henry Leatham (1815-1889), whose Quaker father was the leading Wakefield banker. At age 19 Leatham had joined his father's bank. One sister later married John Bright MP, the advocate of political reform and free trade, another Joseph Gurney Barclay, the banker. In 1839 Leatham married Priscilla, the daughter of Quaker philanthropist Samuel Gurney of Upton, Essex, and they settled at Sandal, near Wakefield.[3]

When the borough of Wakefield was first created in 1832 the young William Leatham had enthusiastically supported Daniel Gaskell, a radical candidate, who was the first to represent Wakefield at Westminster. Twenty-five years later, Leatham sought to win the seat himself for the first time, but retired from the contest at the eleventh hour, convinced he could not win the seat from his Conservative opponent John Charlesworth Dodgson Charlesworth, the wealthy owner of a large Wakefield colliery employing around 2,500 colliers, who was thus returned unopposed. When, after only two years, parliament was dissolved in 1859, Leatham and Charlesworth again contested the Wakefield seat.

It was this election whose scandalous conduct was to reverberate to the eternal shame of the Wakefield electorate and its two candidates through the length and breadth of Britain and beyond.[4] Once the poll had closed on 30 April 1859, and the count had been completed, William Leatham was declared the

winner with a majority of only three votes (406 to 403). However, in early June 1859, among the election petitions submitted to the House of Commons, were those petitioning against both the member returned for Wakefield (Leatham) and the defeated Conservative candidate (Charlesworth). In each instance the complaint against them was grounded on the charge of bribery, treating, intimidation, and undue influence. If the charge after investigation was proved to be true, the successful candidate would lose his seat (be unseated) and a new election must be held. Parliament in this case acted promptly by setting up on 26 July 1859, an Election Committee to look into the petition against the return of Leatham. One day later the Committee chairman appeared at the bar of the House of Commons and reported that the Committee had unanimously agreed "that the election for the borough of Wakefield was void; that Mr. Leatham was not duly elected a burgess to serve in the present Parliament, and that he was, by his agents, guilty of bribery, but that it was not proved that such bribery was committed with the knowledge and consent of the sitting member."[5] In reply, the counsel for Mr. Leatham declared that he had come to the conclusion that it was impossible to further resist the prayer of the petition.

A fortnight later, on 10 August 1859, the Election Committee presented its findings to the full House of Commons, the substance of which was that there had never been an election at which so much money was spent as at the Wakefield election, and consequently the committee had unanimously arrived at the conclusion that there never was a case in which a commission of inquiry was more necessary than in the present. A motion was tabled and agreed to that a commission might be appointed to inquire into the corrupt practices which prevailed at the late election for the borough of Wakefield, and that Mr. Serjeant Pigott, Mr. Henry Willes, and Mr. W. Slade be the commissioners.

The Times estimated on the strength of the Election Committee's enquiry alone that the two candidates must have spent at least £20,000 in trying who could most corrupt a constituency of near one thousand and it expressed the view that it was painfully evident that Wakefield was naturally and spontaneously Conservative and that only by bribery it could become Liberal. That Wakefield was the most corrupt constituency in Europe, and that money and beer would carry any election there, either borough or municipal, was a view widely held and frequently expressed by one of Wakefield's cleverest electioneering agents, a certain Mr. Thomas Smith, whose most memorable achievement was carrying off a lot of voters the night before the election and leaving them some distance out of town without a rag of clothes to cover them.

In the meantime, the political rivalry at Wakefield reached a new climax in the first week of August 1859, when a few enraged Liberals attacked a Mr. Wortley in the street, who had been put forward as the alternative Conservative

candidate for the Wakefield seat now rendered vacant by the unseating of Mr. Leatham. Wortley was hit on the temple by a heavy piece of lead thrown at him, which inflicted a severe wound, with blood streaming down his face. In such a climate it was entirely understandable that the House of Commons felt that an example must be made of bribers and bribed alike: the newly instituted Election Commission must act and act quickly, prosecution was considered to be the first step towards purging the sick body politic.

However, the political temperature again reached fever pitch in Wakefield at the start of the Electoral Commission's (NB not to be mixed up with the Election Committee) enquiry on 5 October 1859. When a Mr. Godfrey Noble from Huddersfield – who in the spring of that year had been employed as electioneering agent by the Wakefield Liberals, and whose earlier revelations before the Election Committee had been the major cause of Mr. Leatham's unseating – was on his way through the town to the Courthouse, he was mobbed and would have been very severely handled too, but for the timely interference of the police.

In order to conduct his electoral campaign Leatham in consultation with his election committee had appointed the only Liberal solicitor in Wakefield, Mr. Joseph Wainwright, as his legal agent, whose lack of any real experience of electioneering, forced him in the last month prior to the election to call in the help of a professional parliamentary and election agent from London, Mr. Thomas Field Gilbert. Gilbert reached Wakefield on 6 April 1859, and for the duration of the election campaign he stayed at Wainwright's house, and was known by his *alias* Mr. Field, or by his nicknames "the conjuror" or "the doctor," because Wainwright did not want his proper identity to be known. Soon after his arrival he started to draw up lists of voters, in three distinct categories. The first, a list of voters on both sides whom no sort of influence could touch; the second, a list of doubtful and unpledged persons, who might be expected to be influenced in some way or other, either legitimately or otherwise; and finally, a third list containing the names of the neutral voters. In addition, there circulated an extensive list in Wainwright's office of persons who were bribable on both sides. At a conservative estimate there were at least 200 names on the list, about a quarter of the entire electorate. Gilbert was introduced as Mr. Field to Mr. Leatham, and they met from time to time in Wainwright's office, sometimes twice a week, sometimes more often. Leatham provided a dogcart for Mr. Gilbert, and on one occasion was heard to address him as "Doctor": "Well, doctor, how are your patients getting on?"

Once Gilbert had charted the state of the borough and had gauged the extent of the bribery by his opponents already under way, he insisted to Joseph Wainwright that his duties be redefined so that he would be the absolute

director of the contest and be free to use all the means he might think necessary for winning it. Wainwright, after consulting with his general election committee, only took a day to make up his mind and then agreed that the matter would be left entirely in Gilbert's hands. From the middle of April Gilbert seriously started his campaign of persuading the doubting and bribable voters of Wakefield to cast their votes for Leatham. For that purpose money was needed and a lot of it.

Leatham, who could have drawn all the money he needed from his own Wakefield bank, wrote a confidential letter to his brother-in-law, Henry Edmund Gurney, partner in the prominent London bank of Overend, Gurney, and Co. asking him to send down £1,000: "I shall want some money for ways and means, and rather than draw it from the bank, where there are some clerks who might talk, I have been thinking that you would not mind me asking you –that is O., G., and Co., lending me £1,000 for a short time, so as not to be known at Leatham, Tew, and Co. [Leatham's own bank at Wakefield]. If you see no objection to meet my wishes I would thank you to send the money in four divisions in registered covers, waiting the acknowledgement of each. Let it be in Bank of England notes of small amount–fives, tens, and twenties." On 9 April 1859, the four packets of £250 each were sent and addressed to "Mr. Wainwright, solicitor, Wakefield." Clearly, by now the gravy train was well on the rails, because two more parcels of money were sent on 20 April and 26 April, respectively, the first containing £500 and the second £1,000. Wainwright's receipts were generally sent to London in a roundabout way, mostly enclosed in letters to a London friend of his, who took care of forwarding them to Overend, Gurney, and Co.

Gilbert, who was convinced that without a generous distribution of "sugar" (the Wakefield slang for money) the Liberals would have no earthly chance of winning the election, now set about making the best use of a dozen or so local bribery agents, who received "roving commissions" from him to buy up votes at £30 and £40 apiece. Gilbert himself always acted as their paymaster. In the words of one of the roving commissioners: "I knew of course that bribery was going on in the town, as everybody else did. It was as commonly talked of in the town as the price of wheat or the state of the weather. The prices were quoted at all figures, from the highest to the lowest. There was not a gentleman in the town who didn't know that bribery was going on with both parties." On polling day Gilbert's efforts seemed to have paid off when Leatham by the smallest of margins was returned for Wakefield, but before the month of July was out, he was unseated and the legal repercussions of the great plague of bribery were to haunt Leatham for the next two years and more.

On 19 July 1860 he was tried for corrupt and illegal practices at the York Assizes, before Mr. Baron Martin, and found guilty, despite the concerted efforts of his friends both in and out of parliament to stop the legal proceedings against him. During the trial it transpired that the £2,500 of which Mr. Gilbert had the handling, was only a portion of the money actually spent by Mr. Leatham, who in a letter to Joseph Wainwright, dated to 4 August 1859, declared that the total amount of his electoral expenses ran to about £4,500. Some £3,700 of this appeared to have been used for illegal purposes. According to the Solicitor-General, Sir William Atherton, it was absolutely necessary that the law should attempt to put down electoral corruption, and teach those possessed of means and not pressed by necessity that it could not be suffered that they should apply the wealth with which providence had blessed them to the selfish and single object of obtaining a seat in Parliament as an honour to themselves, and which ceased to be an honour when so obtained.

In an editorial for *The Times*[6] inspired by the trial at York the writer expressed his special and strong disgust with Mr. Leatham's hypocrisy:

> In the face of all [the] evidence, however, Mr. Leatham instructed his counsel to assert […] that the offence charged was a "degrading offence, which Mr. Leatham's very soul abhorred." Now, this is rather strong. If there be a vice which the English public dislike, it is hypocrisy. We believe that the general disgust which followed the disclosure of the unusually gross corruption at Wakefield was in no small degree increased by the fact that the parties implicated were people who conspicuously affect to be better than other people– to be more patriotic, more conscientious, more public-spirited, more simple-minded, more truth-loving, and even more religious, than their neighbours. People can stand a man of fashion, or a bold adventurer who has never arrogated to himself any superiority over the rest of mankind, playing at fast and loose with bribery, and, perhaps, they are rather too much inclined to pity him if he should suddenly fall into trouble; but they have no such toleration for men who have been all their lives claiming at the hands of their fellow-citizens special respect, or even reverence, for their intense public and private virtues. We fear they will have still less sympathy with the gentleman who ostentatiously perseveres in his profession of purity in the face of overwhelming proofs of his guilt.

Though so far my emphasis has chiefly been on the corrupt practices on the part of the Liberal candidate, we must not overlook the fact that on the Conservative side similar shameless actions were undertaken in support of the candidature of Mr. J. C. D. Charlesworth. He was the owner of a very considerable colliery property near Wakefield and Conservative MP for Wakefield from 1857 to 1859. When on 12 October 1859, he was examined by the Election Commission he claimed that all the money he had provided for the election amounted to £625, which he had supplied to his agent for legal expenses. He stated that he was not aware of any money spent on his behalf with his knowledge or consent. All he was prepared to concede was that some of his friends might have advanced money for improper purposes. In reply to

a question put to him by commissioner Serjeant Pigott, Charlesworth said he believed that his cousin, John Barff Charlesworth, was the one responsible for finding the money used for bribing doubtful Wakefield voters. Cousin Charlesworth banked with both Messrs. Leatham (!) at Wakefield and with Messrs. Beckett of Leeds and his uncle thought it was likely that he got the money from the latter bank. The Conservative candidate declared that he was perfectly aware that all payments ought to be made through the hands of the election auditor and that he had cautioned his cousin against any illegal expenditure on his behalf, concluding that his cousin's account against him might come to thousands of pounds, which he intended to repay fully.[7]

Charlesworth's testimony was exposed as a tissue of lies only two days later when, at the sitting of the Commissioners, Mr. W. Beckett Denison, of the firm of Messrs. Beckett, bankers of Leeds, produced a copy of the private account of Mr. J. Barff Charlesworth. From this it appeared that cousin Charlesworth had drawn on Messrs. Beckett for £1,000 on 16 April; £1,000 on 23 April; £1,500 on 27 April; £500 on 29 April; £250 on 3 May; £500 on 5 May, making a total of £4,750 between 16 April and 5 May. Mr. J. Barff Charlesworth presented all the checks himself after the account had been opened on 11 April. No sum was deposited in the hands of the bankers when the account was opened – the whole amount was an advance from the bank to Mr. J. B. Charlesworth. It was covered by a debenture of the Stockton and Darlington Railway to the amount of £5,000. This debenture was in the name of Mr. J. C. D. Charlesworth, the Conservative candidate. When cousin Charlesworth opened the account, he presented the following letter from the candidate:

> Hatfield-hall, April 9, 1859
> Gentlemen,–My cousin, Mr. J. Barff Charlesworth, is wishful to open an account at your bank. I have given him a debenture on the Stockton and Darlington Railway, which he will deposit with you as security.
> Yours faithfully,
> Messrs. Beckett and Co. J. C. D. CHARLESWORTH

With incriminating evidence of this calibre it should surprise nobody (least of all the Conservative candidate himself), that two years after the election, in a trial for bribery at the York Assizes in the summer of 1861 (19 July 1861) he himself, like his Liberal opponent, was found guilty too.

The borough of Wakefield, after the unseating of Leatham in July 1859, remained unrepresented because the electoral writ was suspended by Parliament. The period of disfranchisement lasted for almost three years, until February 1862, when a new writ was finally issued.

II

In the summer of 1860, fourteen months after the notorious election, Thomas Waller Gissing, who, from his arrival in Wakefield in 1856, had never made a secret of his Liberal/radical sympathies, must have felt the time had come to speak up in public for the candidate he had supported and voted for. Though TWG did not serve on Leatham's election committee, it is inconceivable that he should have remained unaware of the illegal goings-on in Wakefield at the time of the election, even if he did not actively participate in the canvassing on behalf of Leatham. Now that the courts had found Mr. Leatham guilty of illegal and corrupt practices, he wrote the first of three letters to the editor of *The Leader*,[8] in which he sought to put up a defence of sorts by minimising Leatham's lies to a case of mere self-contradiction, while at the same time pointing his finger at Charlesworth's (whose name he carefully and cowardly omits to mention) perjury. This smacks of the schoolboy's lame defence of himself by telling the master that the other boy committed the same offence that he stands accused of.[9] There may remain some little doubt as to the authorship of two of the letters, as the first is signed by "A Subscriber from the First Number," and the third by the letter "W." alone. It is the phrase in the final paragraph of the second letter, "as a subscriber and well-wisher from the first day it appeared, I feel a great interest in the LEADER," that to my mind gives the identity of the author away, even before he signs it in his own full name as T. W. Gissing.

One feels a little disappointed by the character that emerges from these letters, as it appears to force us into retouching significantly the impression of the man, whose intellectual ability, political dedication and altruism may have been overemphasised by his adoring son George. We hear the partisan voice of an angry, biased, at times, spiteful man, only able to see the beam in his own party's eye while pointing to the mote in the Tory party's eye. His final plea for justice does not sit comfortably with the sustained effort to blacken his opponents in order to enable the Liberals to appear "a little whiter."

THE LEADER.

A POLITICAL, LITERARY, COMMERCIAL, AND FAMILY WEEKLY NEWSPAPER, AND RECORD

No. 488. 30 July 1859

THE "MERRY WIVES OF WAKEFIELD."

"*Quis custodes ipsos custodiet.*"[10] We are not aware who is the author of this quotation. We are not aware, also, that it possesses any particular originality; but we are aware–painfully aware–of the fact, that every newspaper correspondent, for the last fortnight, has been citing it daily with reference to the Austrians and French in Italy. There is no ill wind but blows somebody good; and so it is very hard if we may not take advantage of the constant repetition of this unfortunate quotation, to quote it once, and once only, for

our own purposes. We ejaculated it inwardly; we recited it mentally; we murmured it despairingly, when we learnt the dreadful news that the brother-in-law of the great John Bright had been unseated for bribery.

There are few things in this world that we have any faith in. Doubly hard, therefore, is it upon us to lose one of our few illusions. If there was one thing that we did believe in, it was the immaculateness of John Bright. When we have found an ideal we don't like to discover that our ideal is not infallible. If we learnt that Sir Edward Buxton, the friend of negroes, walloped his own footman, we should feel a bitter disappointment. […] If Sir Walter Trevelyan was found rolling drunk in the Haymarket, singing a comic song, we should turn aside and weep in silence. Well, we ourselves, are human after all, and for frailties such as these we could feel compassion, if not pardon; but that a gentleman, bred at the feet of our political Gamaliel, a very Brightite of the Brightites, should be unseated for the vulgar offence of bribery,—really this overthrows our whole moral system of ethics. In future, we shall believe in nothing at all. We really don't know if we may not even come to believe in Palmerston.

It is no use trying to console us with the reflection, that Mr. W. H. Leatham was only the brother-in-law of Mr. Bright. If he had been his own brother we might have consoled ourselves more easily. After all, one has no choice as to one's brother. He is a sort of mortgage on the paternal property, created without your knowledge and executed without your consent, of which you must make the best or the worst, as the case may be. Most men, however, have something to say as to their brothers-in-law. If they have not, they ought to have.

We do not suppose that many of our readers are acquainted with Wakefield. For their sakes we hope they are not. We are. It is a dismal place, and a dreary place. In coaching days it must have been visited with comparative prosperity. Coaches, however, have deserted Wakefield and the world together. The great march of progress and manufacture has forgotten Wakefield in its glorious progress. Dirt and destitution and decay are now the standing institutions of the free and independent borough. Did you ever notice that, in family life, a man who cannot pay his way ceases to be master in his own house? An insolvent husband is hen-pecked by his wife. The same rule applies to towns. "In the country of the blind, the one-eyed are kings." In a town, where all are insolvent, the wives, who are not liable to personal arrest, are rulers. It is so in Wakefield. Women are the cause of every evil under the sun. Had it not been for Eve, instead of contesting elections and writing articles, we should all have been at this hour disporting ourselves merrily in the garden of Paradise. Had it not been for the women of Wakefield, Mr. Leatham, instead of being out of a seat and out of pocket, would have now been sitting in Parliament ready to defend the cause of reform and purity of election. A Quaker may be a match for any man, but any woman is a match for a Quaker. The "merry wives of Wakefield" were too much for Mr. Leatham.

There was Mrs. Jackson, a woman who understood business. If Mr. Leatham's friends wanted her husband's vote, and would have it, why of course they must have it; but the price was 50*l.* A good conscience is a pearl without price, but when once you have made up your mind to sell your conscience, it is wonderful how cheap you will part with it. So the price of Jackson's independence was at last reduced to 30*l.*,

less 1*l*. commission to the broker. Jackson, like all bunglers in a great work of art, nearly marred the transaction by signing a note of hand for the amount. His better half redeemed the error by daring the holders to make any use of the bill, and up to this time no use has been made. Then there was Mrs. Cousens, who considered that if her husband could not legally take money for his vote, she could—and did so to the extent of five-and-twenty sovereigns. Mrs. Ingham, too, deserves a mention. This lady, with a virtue unexampled in Wakefield, remained uncorrupted. She dallied with temptation–she fingered the 5*l*. notes–the wages of iniquity–and then she spurned the proffered bribe. Virtue, however, was its own reward. At the same period, by some mysterious interposition, she was enabled to pay off her debt to a loan company. Wonderful are the ways of Providence.

The best, however, remains behind. We all knew beforehand in the German legends, that if Satan buys the soul of some hardened reprobate there will be some flaw in the blood-stained document. The Devil is sure to lose both capital and interest, and will have to pay the costs into the bargain. Mr. Leatham's agents must be the lineal descendants of the extinct Teutonic fiends. Their folly is yet greater than their wickedness. The husbands of these wise matrons, one and all, went and voted against Mr. Leatham, gave evidence of their own corruption to his opponents, and turned their benefactor out of his hard-earned seat.

Of course we shall be told that Mr. Leatham knew and suspected nothing of all this,—of course not. Ladies who happen to have illegitimate children never do know, or even suspect, till after the event, that they are in the family-way. Senators are "all honourable men," and honourable men never do bribe,—of course not. In our small experience of life we have found, as a general rule, that all money that is spent comes out of somebody's pocket, and that if one's friends spend any money on one's account, they are not dilatory in informing one of the fact. How contested elections come to be an exception to this general rule we do not pretend to divine. Meanwhile we will conclude with one piece of advice to our friend Mr. Bright:—Accidents, as we all know, will occur in the best regulated families, still, after such an accident, in your own happy family, it might be as well if you were not so vehement about aristocratic corruption. If you don't live in a glass house yourself, you have got too close an interest in a neighbouring tenement of glass to afford the luxury of stone throwing.

THE LEADER.

A POLITICAL, LITERARY, COMMERCIAL, AND FAMILY WEEKLY NEWSPAPER, AND RECORD

No. 489. 6 August 1859

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE LEADER."

Wakefield, 1st. Aug., 1859.

SIR,−Men of common sense and ordinary understanding have yet to learn that every man who is blessed or cursed with a brother-in-law is accountable for the acts of that relative. It may be perfectly clear to the editorial sense, or even to the sense of journeymen leading article writers, but I say it is still very doubtful to the mass of men.

You say Mr. Bright is accountable for the acts of Mr. W. H. Leatham, *because* he is his brother-in-law; and you say that Mr. Leatham was "bred at the feet of our political Gamaliel," and that he is a "very Brightite of the Brightites." This is all erroneous assertion. Mr. Leatham is *not* a "Brightite," I wish he were; and I think you were in duty bound to ascertain Mr. Leatham's political opinions before assailing him and Mr. Bright as you have. If you had taken the trouble to read Mr. W. H. Leatham's address on being requested to become a candidate for the representation of Wakefield, you would have found that he distinctly stated that he was *not* a follower of Mr. Bright. Mr. Leatham is a fine, noble-hearted gentleman, as every one will say who knows him. Unfortunately, at the late election some of his friends fell into a trap deliberately laid for them. The Tories, feeling their weakness, and openly confessing that they did not expect to win, except by bribery and intimidation, ordered the disreputable characters, who gave evidence in London, to obtain money from the Liberals by *any* means; if it were not offered, they were to induce offers, so that if the Tories were defeated, the *so-called* bribes (for you will observe that none of the worthies voted *for* Mr. Leatham) could not be made the ground of a petition. They did their work, and, I presume, did it satisfactorily, for it is well known they were liberally paid for it.

You likewise fall into another error–Leatham is not a Quaker, but a member of the Church of England. I am one of your *few* readers who know Wakefield, and a few of the Tory doings in the Borough for a few years past, and *I* certainly think almost any means are justifiable to get rid of this Tory incubus that is destroying us. The very dirt and destitution and decay you name have been caused by Tory rule. I shall feel obliged if you will insert this in your next number as a slight reply to your leading article.–I am, &c.,

A SUBSCRIBER FROM THE FIRST NUMBER.

THE LEADER.

A POLITICAL, LITERARY, COMMERCIAL, AND FAMILY WEEKLY NEWSPAPER, AND RECORD

No. 499. 15 Oct. 1859 [154]

THE BEAUTIES OF BRIBERY.

Hypocrisy is the homage that vice pays to goodness. If so, a bribery commission must be a kind of gigantic hecatomb, offered on the shrine of offended virtue. If ever there was an "organised hypocrisy" it is a parliamentary inquiry into purity of election. The thief is set, not to catch a thief, but to hide a thief. We are bound to confess that the task of non-detection is fulfilled most admirably. The inquiry is not only a story without an end, but it is a story also that was never meant to have an end. Perhaps there would be no great harm if it never had a beginning.

Good, however, may come out of evil. Contact with the hard world had hardened our belief in human virtue. After the perusal of the Gloucester and Wakefield inquiries our failing faith has revived again. To us, Utopia is no longer an empty name, Gloucester is the garden of Eden, and Wakefield is Paradise regained. What is there more beautiful than mutual benevolence; what more noble than silent and unostentatious

generosity; what more endearing than simple, child-like confidence? Henceforth virtue is no poet's dream, benevolence no visionary conception. No; Gloucester is their dwelling place, and Wakefield their local habitation. Unto the pure we know already that all things are pure, but in the charmed atmosphere of these favoured spots the very impure themselves become innocent and guileless. Sir Robert Carden is chairman of a joint-stock bank, alderman of the City corporation, and a member of the London Stock Exchange. One would suppose, *a priori*, that none of these positions were favourable for the cultivation of simple trustfulness and implicit confidence. Mr. Monk is the son of an English bishop, and the son-in-law of a Greek merchant; yet notwithstanding, for guilelessness and simplicity, he might be the scion of some Greek Episcopos, in the days of primitive Christianity, when the church had all things in common, and when spiritual peers, and country curates, and Greek loans had not yet arisen on the face of the earth. Mr. Price is a timber merchant, and yet a life-long experience of charter-parties, and policies, and drafts against consignments, has taught him to trust all men at all times. Mr. Leatham is a Manchester man, a mill-owner and cotton lord, and brother-in-law to Mr. Bright–not the most charitable or unsuspicious of mortals–and yet the lesson Mr. Leatham has learnt in life is one of faith, hope, and charity.

All these gentlemen–however unlike their careers may have been, however dissimilar their politics–are alike in the simplicity of their character. Well have they followed the scriptural precept. Being in the world, they are out of the world. When they are at Gloucester, they do as Gloucester does. Elsewhere they may be shrewd, hard-headed men, proud of their knowledge of the world. Here, and here alone, they exchange the wisdom of the serpent for the meekness of the dove. They think no evil. They behold vice and know it not. They touch pitch and are not defiled. Political Godivas, they are exposed to the public gaze, and strong in the innocence of purity, come forth chaste and stainless.

A portion of their mantle descends on their adherents. Their friends and supporters are, for the time being, gifted with a scarcely less degree of trustfulness and simplicity. They go about doing good. They help the needy and feed the hungry–voter. They go into shops, and ask the shopman to sell them what article he likes and name his own price. They write off old debts, and volunteer to compound with the creditors of distressed electors. Their pockets are always open, and their right hand never knows what their left hand gives. They find £500 notes lying in an envelope on their tables, and are not surprised. They no more think of asking where it came from than Elijah did of questioning the ravens in the wilderness. They see nothing strange in men bringing down sovereigns under a feigned name, and take it for an ordinary trade precaution. The Saturnian age has returned again. Our sole regret is that its duration should be so short, and that we ourselves were not admitted within the sacred circle, or shared in the sanctifying influence. As, however, we have only watched the revival from a distance our conversion is not yet complete. Something of the old man still remains within us, and a misplaced curiosity compels us to ask how it is that in no other occasion in life do zealous philanthropists expend money on behalf of their friends without being solicited; without ever expecting or asking to be repaid; and strangest of all without ever letting the objects of their benevolent charity even suspect the obligation conferred upon them. The

stern law of fact suggests that the money spent at Wakefield and Gloucester must ultimately have come out of somebody's pocket. Whose pocket, we cannot guess; of course, not the candidates! Perhaps the money, like manna, had a miraculous origin. Marvellous, indeed, are the effects of Gloucester grace.

THE LEADER.

A POLITICAL, LITERARY, COMMERCIAL, AND FAMILY WEEKLY NEWSPAPER, AND RECORD

No. 500. 22 Oct. 1859 [7]

Wakefield Again.

To the Editor of "The Leader."

Sir,–As your "Wakefield subscriber," I must again take the liberty of correcting a mistake that you make to-day in referring to W. H. Leatham, Esq., late member for this borough. You say Mr. Leatham is "a Manchester man, a mill-owner, a cotton lord, and brother-in-law to Mr. Bright." Here are four assertions, but only one is correct. Mr. Leatham is none of the first three, being a country gentleman entirely unconnected with trade or commerce.

When you again refer to the peccadilloes of the Liberals in this borough, be kind enough to remember that we have a Tory faction – hitherto dominant for some years– and that in the evidence given before the commissioners on Friday last, Mr. Denison, banker of Leeds, stated that Mr. J. C. D. Charlesworth was security for the sum of £5,000, to be advanced to his cousin–which sum was all advanced (except £250) between the middle of April and 5th of May last. Mr. Charlesworth's cousin being very active during the election, it has to be proved what became of this £4,750.

Yours respectfully,
T. W. Gissing

LEADER AND SATURDAY ANALYST.

2nd June 1860. No. 532.

THE WAKEFIELD BRIBERS.

The House of Commons is very jealous of its privileges; we wish it were half as careful of its honour. The night it adjourned for the Whitsun holidays it followed up the appointment of a Committee to search for precedents with respect to the late invasion of its rights by the Lords, with a most disgraceful attempt to "burke" the prosecutions instituted by the ATTORNEY-GENERAL against the Wakefield bribers. And worst of all, the noisiest and most zealous vindicators of the privilege were the most active agents in the plot to screen the criminals. Mr. TOM DUNCOMBE,[11] Mr. EDWIN JAMES,[12] and Mr. BRIGHT, whose intense zeal for the exclusive power of the people to tax themselves would not suffer them to rest content with LORD PALMERSTON'S slow, humdrum expedient of a Committee to inquire into precedents, professed as great a horror, and probably a much more sincere one, at the bare idea that Messrs. LEATHAM

and CHARLESWORTH should be called upon to answer for the wholesale corruption of which they were guilty at the general election. If any credulous person has hitherto believed in the sincerity of the anti-bribery zeal of the leaders of the House of Commons, this admirable commentary upon the fine speeches and virtuous declarations must thoroughly undeceive him. The Radicals are quite as bad as the Tories, and even worse, because they make much greater professions of virtue. The only man who comes out of the discussion creditably is the ATTORNEY-GENERAL, and his consistency and determination are probably due quite as much to his natural obstinacy, as to any particular abhorrence of the offence or anxiety to punish the offenders. If the prosecutions had been instituted against any other persons than the candidates, not an exception would have been taken. The House would have looked on very composedly whilst the subordinate agents were being harassed with a trial, which as poor men they could ill defend themselves against, and would have felt a glow of conscious virtue when the poor wretches were sentenced to some twelve months' imprisonment. But when Sir R. BETHELL,[13] after being badgered by questions into taking up the matter, determined to strike at the great sinners, and selected four leading men, including the candidates, on each side for prosecution, the virtue of honourable gentlemen oozed out like BOB ACRE'S valour; and a jeremiad is raised against the hardship of the proceeding, the real cause of complaint being that such a precedent may expose members themselves to unpleasant consequences. *Dat veniam corvis vexat censura columbas.*[14]

Very little was heard of Mr. CHARLESWORTH in the discussion. The great object of compassion was Mr. LEATHAM. Let us see, what are this gentleman's claims to immunity from the consequences of his illegal acts. The only plea openly put forward is, that he made a full disclosure, and ought, therefore, to have received from the Commission a certificate of indemnity; but that argument is worthless. The certificate is not a formal document, to be granted of right–its allowance is within the discretion of the Commissioners; in the exercise of that discretion, they have refused to give one either to Mr. LEATHAM or Mr. CHARLESWORTH, and no one can review their decision. The evidence of neither gentleman can, as Sir G. C. LEWIS[15] showed, be used against him; and the attempt to override the discretion of the Commissioners in favour of two gentlemen of wealth and influence is, to say the least, most indecent. It is true the opinion of one of the Commissioners–Serjeant PIGOTT[16]–was in favour of granting Mr. LEATHAM a certificate, but the opinion of the learned Serjeant must be received with considerable allowance. He enjoys the honour of Mr. BRIGHT's friendship, a circumstance which, unless he were a little more than human, would be likely to incline him to mercy towards that gentleman's brother-in-law. He is a radical barrister, on the look out for a seat in Parliament, and was the trusted adviser of the other LEATHAM, him of Huddersfield, who, in the exuberance of his gratitude for the preservation of his seat, called upon his constituents to give three cheers for the Serjeant, and even suggested the propriety of inviting him to a great demonstration. There is, in fact, nothing to show that Mr. LEATHAM is entitled to the special lenity asked for him, but there is much to show that he is a particularly eligible subject for prosecution. We cannot forget that before the Committee of the House of Commons he solemnly

affirmed that his whole expenditure for the election amounted only to some six or seven hundred pounds, and that he knew nothing of the bribery done in his name; whilst before the Commissioners he confessed that the expenditure was really four thousand pounds, and admitted enough to show that he was cognisant of its application. There has seldom been a grosser case; and if Mr. LEATHAM is allowed to go scot-free, the ATTORNEY-GENERAL cannot undertake another prosecution for bribery. Mr. CHARLESWORTH was quite as bad as Mr. LEATHAM, so far as the bribes was concerned, although he did not make the same false statements–perhaps because he was not exposed to the same temptation. We have dwelt especially upon Mr. LEATHAM's peccadilloes because he was the especial object of the sympathy of the virtuous foes of corruption. We wish to see both candidates prosecuted, and both punished.

Sufficient discredit has been cast upon the House of Commons, and, what we are more inclined to resent, upon the Liberal cause, by the miserable apologies offered for these men. But the result of this debate, and of the further efforts of Mr. LEATHAM's friends, should be any such decided expression of its opinion as to warrant the ATTORNEY-GENERAL in dropping the prosecutions, the House must at once make up its mind that no further information at the instance of that officer will be suffered. The country will not allow the tools of honourable gentlemen to be fined, imprisoned, and branded as infamous, whilst the employers–however clear the evidence of their guilt–are let off. Much better to remove from the statute book the laws against bribery, and legalise all contracts of the kind between candidate and voter, than continue this disgusting farce, in which men of high character do not scruple to take part. Let us be spared the miserable spectacle of the House of Commons hounding on the officers of justice upon poor ignorant wretches, and preventing at the instance of popular leaders those officers of justice from pursuing for worse degrees of the same offence men of wealth, position, and connexions.

LEADER AND SATURDAY ANALYST.

9th June 1860. No. 533

To the Editor of THE LEADER AND SATURDAY ANALYST.

SIR, –To proceed at once to the subject of this letter, may I ask if you have attentively read the evidence given before the Commission of Inquiry at Wakefield? It is an easy thing to write "leaders" against individuals, but it is impossible for a stranger to understand the true position of affairs at Wakefield, and without knowing the characters of the witnesses he cannot come to a fair conclusion respecting the facts.

You say, "The certificate is not a formal document, to be granted of right." I maintain that every witness who willingly gave information of all he knew, had a full right to the certificate, and the promise of the commissioners entitled him to demand it. There may be exceptions, such as in the case of men who at first denied all knowledge of bribery, and only acknowledged the truth after they had been convicted of perjury.

You state likewise that Mr. Leatham gave contradictory evidence before the House of Commons Committee, and before the Election Commission. If you will read the evidence in both places, you will find that before the House of Commons Committee he stated all that he had supplied – and that was the question–but added that he did not know what his friends had done. He afterwards found what had been spent, and went to the Inquiry Commissioners, and plainly stated it. You say he spent £4,000; but you ignore the evidence of his agent, who said that a sum of money had to be returned to Mr. Leatham, that would reduce his expenditure to £2,700.

You say the two candidates were equally bad. To test this, contrast their conduct before the Commissioners. The one denied all knowledge of any expenditure beyond what had been reported to the auditor, until he was compelled (through the evidence of a Leeds banker) to acknowledge that he deposited a security for £5,000, to defray election expenses, and deposited it in another town, and at a bank where he did no (or next to no) business. The candidate was examined three times–so unsatisfactory did his evidence appear to the Commissioners. The other candidate at once stated what he knew, and was never recalled.

The flight of the chief witnesses and actors on one side proved there *was* something to keep back, and the systematic "don't know" on the part of all the witnesses on that side proved extensive collusion; and, add to this, heavy pecuniary offers to more than one of the most active agents and witnesses on both sides, either to withhold evidence or "run away"–together seem to prove satisfactorily which side was the worse. The Liberals gave their evidence fully and explicitly, determining, as they had been dragged into disgrace, that they would do all in their power to redeem the error. Strangers even can judge of the relative merits of the two candidates to receive certificates, by simply comparing their evidence before the Commissioners. All the abuse heaped on Serjeant Pigott cannot disprove facts; and the statement he has since made only proves him a more discriminating and juster judge, and not one who would say, "We can't give Mr. A. his certificate, and therefore, to balance them, we will refuse Mr. B. his."

Amidst all our virtuous indignation, let us do justice; and I hope the LEADER (above all papers) will not condescend to assist the Tories in blackening their opponents to enable themselves to appear a little whiter. As a subscriber and well-wisher from the first day it appeared, I feel a great interest in the LEADER, and, with many other subscribers, hope it will never condescend to aid retrogression, by assisting the Tories to disseminate their false statements and false principles.

I am, Sir, yours respectfully,
Wakefield, June 2, 1860. W.

[We insert this letter, though contrary to rule, as the writer considers he has a case; and we can but desire the truth, and the whole truth, of such matters, should be made known. Of the article in the paper alluded to we know nothing whatever, nor had we any "local" communication on the subject.–ED.]

[1] George Gissing, *A Life's Morning*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1984), p. xliv.

[2] Clifford Brook, "References to Wakefield in *Denzil Quarrier*," *Gissing Newsletter*, 17:3 (July 1981), p. 17.

[3] See: Charlotte Fell-Smith, *rev*. Megan A. Stephen, "Leatham, William Henry (1815-1889), poet and politician," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004-2008).

[4] E.g. on 13 August 1859, the Wakefield electoral bribery was reported in the *New York Times* under the heading: "Democratic Dishonesty: TWO ENGLISH LIBERAL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT EJECTED FOR BRIBERY."

[5] Anon., "Wakefield Election Committee," *Times*, 28 July 1859, p. 6.

[6] Anon., "The Great Oyer of Bribery," *Times*, 21 July 1860, p. 8.

[7] The full account (460 closely printed pages of double columns) of the proceedings, findings and conclusions of the Election Committee was published in the *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Existence of Corrupt Practices at Elections for the Borough of Wakefield, together with the minutes of the evidence,* Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1860). The complete report can be accessed on the following site:http://books.google.com/books?id=SNESAAAAYAAJ&pg=PP13&dq=Report+of+the+Commissioners+appointed+to+inquire+into+the+existence+of+corrupt+practices+for+the+Borough+of+Wakefield&hl=nl#v=onepage&q=&f=false.

[8] The *Leader* (1850-1860) was a mid-century weekly paper that "managed to harbour a spectrum of radicals, from Republicans to Christian Socialists in a fragile and contested weekly space." The *Leader* was a sixpence weekly of 24 pages which began as a radical and pervasively political paper, whose profile must have appealed to a man like Thomas Waller Gissing with his distinctly Chartist ideals. The *Leader's* editorial attacks on Leatham's dishonesty and trickery must therefore have been all the more painful for TWG to stomach.

[9] Though Pierre Coustillas in *The Heroic Life of George Gissing, Part I: 1857-1888* does refer (p. 19) in passing to TWG's unsigned articles as a political journalist for the *Free Press* in 1865, in Coustillas' claim that "They show him to have been a vigorous opponent of the Tories in the summer of 1865 when William Henry Leatham was elected MP, and [fought] a petition filed by the Tories to unseat him," he strikingly omits any reference whatsoever to Leatham's conviction for blatant perjury and bribery. Mere peccadilloes?

[10] Juvenal, *Satire* VI, 347–348. Various translations are known: Who will guard the guards themselves?; Who watches the watchers?; and Who will watch the watchmen?

[11] Thomas Slingsby Duncombe (1796-1861). MP for Finsbury from 1834 until his death. Supported Chartism. Independent Liberal.

[12] Edwin John James (1812-1882). Barrister. Elected Liberal MP for Marylebone in February 1859. Disbarred in 1861.

[13] Sir Richard Bethell (1800-1873). Elected MP for Aylesbury in 1851. Appointed Attorney-General in 1856. Lord Chancellor from 1861 until 1865.

[14] Juvenal, *Satire* II, 63. Translation: The censor absolves the crow and passes judgment on the dove.

[15] Sir George Cornewall Lewis, Bart. (1806-1863). Liberal MP for Radnor (1859-1863). Statesman and man of letters.

[16] Sir Gillery Pigott (1813-1875). Barrister. Liberal MP for Reading (1860-1863). Judge in the Court of the Exchequer (1863-1875).

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Linguistic Otherness in *By the Ionian Sea. Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy* (1901): a Comparison with Giovanni Verga's Short Stories

MICHELE RUSSO
University of Foggia, Italy

To any reader, the most natural and immediate definition of *By the Ionian Sea* is that of a travel book, since, as is well known, it describes the traveller's route in Southern Italy, or, better, a travel book written for educated readers, owing to the frequent historical and geographical references which are woven into the narrative.[1] The book depicts foreign landscapes and people, with a particular emphasis on geographical and anthropological details, and is the expression of Gissing's interest in Magna Graecia and in the influence of the Greek civilisation on Southern Italian people.[2] However, the narrative space of Gissing's diary invites to further reflections related to space and place, as well as to an engaging discourse from a linguistic angle. Narrative space has often been regarded as a 'container' where actions and events are set and which supplies, therefore, the background to the plot. Over time, narrative space has been examined from a social angle and its dynamic nature has been highlighted, so that it has gradually lost its 'passive' function. As Maria Teresa Chialant writes, it was seen "[…] as a *relational space*, a product of the interaction between people."[3] Spaces, which were once considered a-cultural, existing everywhere and anytime, were then contextualised, as a result of different theorisations, to refer to a specific culture. Following this contextualisation, they became places where social relations occurred and developed.[4] In other words, spaces, according to their traditional meaning, are abstract, immaterial, intangible and static, whereas places are material expressions of anthropic actions and, therefore, dynamic.

The topological analysis of Gissing's account is strictly connected with the linguistic context, since, being expressions of a specific culture, places are also the linguistic characterisations of the people that inhabit them. As a travel book and, therefore, a book describing places, *By the Ionian Sea* combines biographical and realistic elements. It is, among other things, a travel autobiography, in which the author fuses realistic elements with his own impressions of Southern Italian culture. Such impressions, in turn, pave the way for an artistic and idealised view of the world he visits, 'embellished' with his reconstructions and reflections of the historical background of those places. Objective and subjective elements are thus employed to recreate the world of Magna Graecia and to investigate, at the same time, the voices from the past and the linguistic aspects that the descendants of Greek civilisation inherited.[5]

Starting from these observations, the aim of this essay is to explore the linguistic texture of Gissing's work, by considering its social and cultural

contextualisation as the traveller's journey progresses. The linguistic approach is a means to compare the author's socio-linguistic background with the concept of *Otherness*; language is, therefore, the means to communicate with an ancient civilisation, with the purpose of grasping its most intimate aspects and relating them to Gissing's linguistic context. To this end, the work will take into account the theories of cultural *Otherness* and of the 'hosting/hosted' language, and will focus on the narrative analysis of some of Giovanni Verga's short stories in order to compare Gissing's linguistic style and the Veristic approach pertaining to the linguistic structure of Verga's short stories. As is well known, Verga was a Sicilian writer and mainly focused, with his realistic language, on the depiction of Sicilian rural life, characterised by the inescapable sufferings of farmers and of rural people, often doomed to a life riddled with privations. Gissing, who had read Verga in 1896 prior to his 'intrusion' into Southern Italian civilisation, was conditioned by his wish to escape from the Northern grey skies and to experience the *reverie* of travelling back in time, surrounded by the wonders of the vestiges of Magna Graecia.[6]

To Gissing, classical languages are pervaded by an Aesthetic charm, since they convey exoticism and an involvement with the Aesthetic credo of art for art's sake:

> Every man has his intellectual desire; mine is to escape life as I know it and dream myself into that old world which was the imaginative delight of my boyhood. The names of Greece and Italy draw me as no others; they make me young again, and restore the keen impressions of that time when every new page of Greek and Latin was a new perception of things beautiful. The world of the Greeks and Romans is my land of romance; a quotation in either language thrills me strangely, and there are passages of Greek and Latin verse which I cannot read without a dimming of the eyes, which I cannot repeat aloud because my voice fails me. In Magna Graecia the waters of two fountains mingle and flow together; how exquisite will be the draught![7]

The work oozes with Italian phrases and expressions as well, which Gissing hears and quotes in the text to convey the main typical expressions of Southern Italian people. At the beginning of his account, the author expresses his paralinguistic observations and comments on people's intonation, as well as on the overtones of the meanings that their intonation discloses. During his stay in Paola, he states:

> The only vivid memory of these people which remains with me is the cadence of their speech. Whilst I was breakfasting, two women stood at gossip on a near balcony, and their utterance was a curious exaggeration of the Neapolitan accent; every sentence rose to a high note, and fell away in a long curve of sound, sometimes a musical wail, more often a mere whining. The protraction of the last word or two was really astonishing; again and again I fancied that the speaker had broken into song. I cannot say that the effect was altogether pleasant; in the end such talk would tell severely on civilised nerves, but it harmonised with the coloured houses, the luxuriant vegetation, the strange odours, the romantic landscape.[8]

Despite not being familiar with the local dialect, he is keen on listening to the conversations among people and he lets himself be led into a metalinguistic dimension by the sounds of the local language in order to unearth the linguistic connections with Greek civilisation. As the traveller progresses along his geographical route and passes through fascinating places, a new linguistic world stands out among the inaccessible territories of Calabria, and he gradually experiences a linguistic journey beyond the present time of his narration. He means to look into the sounds and accents he hears around, and to thoroughly understand to what extent Greek influence accounts for the local cultural and linguistic background. For example, when he is in Taranto, in Apulia, he at once discerns links with the ancient Greeks:

> To-day the fisher-folk form a colony apart; they speak a dialect which retains many Greek words unknown to the rest of the population. I could not gaze at them long enough; their lithe limbs, their attitudes at work or in repose, their wild, black hair, perpetually reminded me of shapes pictured on a classic vase.[9]

The everyday scenes bring back ancient images of the people who settled in this area and left their traces everywhere. In spite of Gissing's knowledge of Italian, he struggles to understand some colloquialisms in the Southern Italian dialect. As a result, he looks at people's gestures and at their physical features and relies, at the same time, on the paralinguistic aspects to grasp the possible meanings of these chats. Further evidence of the Greek heritage is an inscription he sees in Taranto, which he quotes in Italian: "'Alla Magna Graecia. Stabilimento Idroelettropatico.' It was well meant. At the sign of 'Magna Graecia' one is willing to accept 'hydroelectropathic' as a late echo of Hellenic speech."[10] The traveller's comment highlights that even a word like "hydroelectropathic," conveying the echoes of modernity and industrialisation, is 'shaped' by a Greek prefix and suffix. His paralinguistic comments are followed by an example in which Gissing proves his translation skills, thus showing his increased familiarity with Italian. When he is in Taranto, he explains the translation of a story about a miracle, which he reads on a leaflet he buys from a man. As he writes, "Much verbiage I have omitted, but the translation, as far as it goes, is literal."[11] Gissing provides a paraphrastic translation of his literal translation of the story, quoting some Italian phrases, like "*con grande stupore di tutti*" and "*i dotti della chiesa*,"[12] and emphasising his interest in disentangling any foreign message or expression. The writer is aware of the difficulty in understanding such different and cacophonous sounds in these parts of Italy; yet he strains to comprehend any inscription or conversation in Southern Italian. During his illness (it was common at that time to come down with malaria in Southern Italy), when he is stuck in Cotrone, he admits such a difficulty:

> Whilst my fever was high, little groups of people often came into the room, to stand and stare at me, exchanging, in a low voice, remarks which they supposed I did not hear, or, hearing, could not understand; as a matter of fact, their dialect was now intelligible enough to me, and I knew that they discussed my chances of surviving. […] The hostess went about uttering ceaseless moans and groans; when she was in my room I heard her constantly sighing, "Ah, Signore! Ah, Cristo!" – exclamations which, perhaps, had some reference to my illness, but which did not cease when I recovered.[13]

His familiarity with the local language allows him to 'boast' about his coveted bilingualism in such sentences as "There had been *guai*, worse than usual," "[…] and it was not hard that she should be used like this after having *tanto, tanto lavorato!*," "[…] all her kith and kin were *freddi morti* (stone dead)."[14] His long stay in a foreign linguistic context results in frequent bilingual sentences, in which the auxiliary verb, written in English, agrees with the past participle, written in Italian. At the same time, he is surprised to read some labels written in English in a shop: "At a shop door hung certain printed cards, bearing a notice that 'wood hay-makers,' 'wood binders,' and 'wood mowers' were 'sold here.' Not in Italian this, but in plain, blunt English."[15]

Far from stating that Gissing became bilingual, such linguistic interferences allow one to analyse *By the Ionian Sea* from the perspective of linguistic *Otherness*, by taking into account Bhabha's theories on *Otherness*, even though they pertain to the issues of colonialism and racial discrimination.[16] According to Bhabha, the concept of fixity, which he employs to discuss cultural differences and issues related to colonialism, "[…] is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition."[17] Likewise, in his representation of the Southern Italian context, Gissing experiences a passage from the 'fixed' linguistic system of the English-speaking world to the hybrid linguistic context of Southern Italy. Such a context reveals its hybridity in the dialect and regional accents which distort Gissing's understanding of a foreign language. Although Gissing had travelled around Europe and had, therefore, been in contact with other linguistic contexts, he 'trespasses' on the borders of exotic places and analyses the different and unfathomable regional nuances of the Southern Italian language. By crossing the places of Southern Italy, as spaces where social relationships flourish, he experiences the "border and frontier conditions"[18] of a foreigner who is puzzled by the chats he has with the people he meets. The fixity of the English linguistic context is blurred by the ambiguity of Italian regional sounds and accents, which lead the author to a state of confusion, disorder, temporary linguistic in-betweenness, and to experiment with travel writing, interspersed with linguistic interferences, quite unusual for a Victorian writer. The introduction of frequent foreign expressions increases such linguistic

'ambivalence,' since the writer makes use of Italian phrases and creates syntactic agreements between words of two different languages.

If the Italian phrases are construed with the English macrotext to create meaningful sentences, Gissing turns to sporadic Latin expressions to trace out his interest in certain linguistic sources which marked the cultural background of the places he visits. Apart from the "Dulce Galaesi Flumen,"[19] a phrase that reminds him of Horace, Gissing remembers Cassiodorus, a Roman statesman and scholar, born near Catanzaro, whose *Variae* are "[n]ot quite easy to read, for the Latin is by no means Augustan."[20] When he comments on Cassiodorus's work, Gissing quotes a Latin sentence written by King Theodoric in one of his letters: "*Religionem imperare non possumus, quia nemo cogitur ut credat invitus* – we cannot impose a religious faith, for no one can be compelled to believe against his conscience."[21] Theodoric's Latin quotation is not functional to the syntactic structure of the text, as often occurs with Italian words, but is used to provide some information about Cassiodorus and the King. The Latin sentence accounts for Theodoric's religious toleration and Gissing shows once again not only his interest in the language of Southern Italian people, but also in these people's *lingua mater*. The traveller offers the English translation of the King's sentence and employs extra words to render the lapidary style of the Latin sentence, like "religious faith" and "against his conscience." Gissing quotes another Latin sentence from the *Variae*, when he dwells on Cassiodorus and on the monastery he founded, the *Monasterium Vivariense*. He says that "[a] third class of monks finds mention, those in whom '*Frigidus obstiterit circum praecordia sanguis*.'"[22] Gissing does not translate the quotation from Virgil's *Georgiche*, but gives his own definition of this expression. Considering that the quotation from the *Variae* literally means "The cold blood around the heart will prevent [me from doing something]," (my translation), Gissing writes that this sentence refers to those monks who are "hopelessly stupid."[23] Also, Cassiodorus points out in his work that the monks of the monastery had to educate the peasants living around the monastery, so that "[…] they do not *lucos colere* – worship in groves – which shows that a heathen mind still lingered among the people, and that they reverenced the old deities."[24] Gissing matches, as he does with the Italian words, the English construction with the Latin words, of which he provides a translation. Such Latin quotations are not intended to discuss Gissing's knowledge of Latin, neither do I need to prove that Gissing knew Latin or Italian. His 'philological' approach to Latin and Italian allowed him to comprehend certain phrases and expressions and to translate them into English. What can be inferred from Gissing's attitude to the languages of the classical world (I have used the plural because, in addition to Latin, I would include Greek too, the language of the inhabitants of Magna Graecia) is that he is willing to be

'hosted,' to be 'welcomed' by the languages of the *Other*, since he lets the languages of Southern Italy influence his writing with numerous linguistic interferences. Such a linguistic journey, which never results, as I have argued, in bilingual writing, is the consequence of his border-crossing as he visits the most remote areas of Southern Italy. The payment of the *dazi* (duties) marks his passage from one place to another, and each place is characterised by different cultural aspects and accents. A perusal of the text suggests that Gissing is willing to experience a process of linguistic and cultural 'dispossession' in order to be 'welcomed' by the 'hosting' language. He means to pursue this aim by translating documents, literary texts and any written or oral message he reads or listens to. As Zaccaria argues, the translator is a 'hosting' translator, in that he or she receives someone else's text and, at the same time, he or she seeks refuge, a home, in someone's text or language.[25] The traveller, being the translator of a different cultural context, enters the space of hybridity, confusion, discussion, distortion, disorientation. Gissing's translation of documents and conversations opens new horizons, spaces and territories, where he can look into the remains of ancient cultures.

Although the language of Southern Italy is 'misleading,' Gissing can penetrate the complexity of the conversations, which he traces back to the local people's ancestors. The ambivalent nature of the Southerners is unveiled by their long discourses. Their apparent rudeness and ignorance recede from view during their complex conversations. When he is in a bar in Catanzaro, he is impressed by the conversations he hears and, by imagining and comparing the same scene in his country, he recognises the superiority of the Calabresi in terms of thinking and linguistic expression. In this regard, he states:

> Among these representative men, young and old, of Catanzaro, the tone of conversation was incomparably better than that which would rule in a cluster of English provincials met to enjoy their evening leisure. They did, in fact, converse – a word rarely applicable to English talk under such conditions; mere personal gossip was the exception; they exchanged genuine thoughts, reasoned lucidly on the surface of abstract subjects. I say on the surface; no remark that I heard could be called original or striking; but the choice of topics and the mode of viewing them was distinctly intellectual. Phrases often occurred such as have no equivalent on the lips of everyday people in our own country. […] From many a bar-parlour in English country towns I have gone away heavy with tedium and disgust; the café at Catanzaro seemed, in comparison, a place of assembly for wits and philosophers.[26]

According to the writer, Southerners, being descendants of outstanding scholars and philosophers, have inherited their skill in having conversations about complex and abstract topics; he is impressed by the abstractness of their discourses. He recognises their language skills as well as the depth of their thoughts, and attributes their intellectual potential to the great scholars of Magna Graecia who paved the way for the cradle of civilisation. The Southerners' language conveys the echoes of ancient scholars and reproduces

in their conversations the linguistic vitality of their forebears. Gissing does not only compare his mother tongue with a classical language, he also points out the different frame of mind of the people he meets in Calabria. They are more sensitive to spiritual matters, whereas the English can only converse about practical, down-to-earth issues. This difference in the frame of mind leads Gissing to acknowledge that the classical language lends itself to abstract and more complex discourses than his mother tongue.

From a stylistic angle, the traveller's diary is interspersed with elements of realism and idealism. The author depicts, by reproducing the locals' expressions, scenes of everyday life and, at the same time, travels back in time to recreate and idealise the ancient world, thus dwelling on the expressive means of the classical languages. In addition to the coexistence of realistic and idealistic elements, *By the Ionian Sea* is a valuable anthropological document which engages the reader in a journey along the borders of Europe, where the marks of the past are still visible. As such, it employs a realistic language to provide the reader with as many cultural and linguistic details as possible, along with digressions, as I have argued, about the world of the past, which broaden the writer's imaginary horizons. Although other well-known English writers had already used realistic language to represent the social issues in their country and the poor's ineluctable destiny, like Dickens and Hardy, Gissing focuses on the portrayal of life in a foreign context, affected by remarkable cultural backwardness. Likewise, in the Italian literary culture of Gissing's time, a Southern writer like Verga, who was contemporary with Gissing, utilises a descriptive language and a realistic style in his short stories, offering a truthful depiction of Sicilian workers and rural life. Critics have carried out some comparative studies of Gissing and Verga; however, I would suggest lingering on the linguistic style that the two writers adopt to highlight the social problems in Southern Italy.[27] Gissing represents the English perspective on life in the Southern Italian regions. The realism of his language consists in the use of some local expressions (like "*Abbass' 'o sindaco!* […] *Abbasso!*" when he refers, as I will discuss, to the crowd's protest against the *fuocatico*, a tax, and "Ah, Cristo!"[28] when he refers to the owner of the inn in Cotrone) and in the long detailed descriptions of people and places. Verga, whose stylistic and linguistic imprint is perceptible in the English traveller's account, adopts, as a native speaker, a more insightful language, characterised by frequent Sicilian phrases and words. If Gissing's narration switches between the blunt descriptions of people's lives and the imaginary journeys back into the classical past, Verga's short stories, the epitomes of the veristic style, do not let the reader catch a glimpse of any pastoral scenes; he abruptly unfolds the everyday life of Sicilian people with such a straightforward language that the

reader is unconsciously engaged in the Sicilian context, neither is he or she allowed to sympathise with that world.

What strikes one most is the beginning *in medias res* of Verga's short stories; they often lack introductory information, as a reader would expect, and plunge straight into the crucial situation of the story. The story "Malaria," published in the 1883 collection *Novelle rusticane (Short Stories about Countryside Life)*, begins as follows: "E' vi par di toccarla colle mani […] stagnante nella pianura, a guisa dell'afa pesante di luglio" ("It seems to you to touch it with your hands […] stagnant on the plain, like the heavy heat of July").[29] The first lines of the story provide the main subject, which is introduced by mentioning the disease with an object pronoun, and illustrates the setting right away. Both Verga and Gissing give numerous details in their descriptions of rural life; however, the former employs complex syntactic structures and long sentences which, in-between the lines, convey the writer's detachment and his lack of sympathy. In the long description of the setting in "Malaria," he writes:

> La sera, appena cade il sole, si affacciano sull'uscio uomini arsi dal sole, sotto il cappellaccio di paglia e colle larghe mutande di tela, sbadigliando e stirandosi le braccia; e donne seminude, colle spalle nere, allattando dei bambini già pallidi e disfatti […]. Allora bisogna pure che chi semina e chi raccoglie caschi come una spiga matura, perché il Signore ha detto: «Il pane che si mangia bisogna sudarlo». Come il sudore della febbre lascia qualcheduno stecchito sul paglericcio di granoturco, […], lo si carica sulla carretta del fieno, o attraverso il basto dell'asino, o su di una scala, come si può, con un sacco sulla faccia, e si va a deporlo alla chiesuola solitaria, sotto i fichidindia spinosi di cui nessuno perciò mangia i frutti.
>
> (At night, as soon as the sun sets, sun-baked men appear at the door, wearing their old shabby straw hats and large cloth underpants, yawning and stretching their arms; and half-naked women, with their black shoulders, breast-feeding their babies who are already pale and worn-out […]. Therefore, it is necessary for those who sow and harvest to fall down like a ripe ear, because the Lord stated: "You must toil for the bread you eat." As the fever-sweat leaves someone stone-dead on the corn palliasse, […], he is loaded onto the hay cart, or by means of the donkey's pack-saddle or a ladder, just as they can, with a sack on his face, and he is laid at the solitary little church, near the thorny prickly pears whose fruits, therefore, nobody dares to eat).[30]

Verga's language makes use of numerous derogatory expressions referring to the countryside people of his stories. The Italian writer underscores the hardships these people have to suffer, but he does not include his observations, neither does he express his sympathy (even though his perspective is sometimes perceptible). To the reader, the people appear as they look, doomed to their privations and to their ineluctable lot. Gissing's descriptions of the Southerners are similar in the amount of details, but do not lack the writer's emotional participation, owing to the use of the first-person narration, which

leads him to make his comments on the people's attitude. When he runs into a farmer in Taranto, he dwells on his work:

> Later in the day I came upon a figure scarcely less impressive. […] there, alone amid great bare fields, a countryman was ploughing. The wooden plough, […] was drawn by a little donkey, and traced in the soil […] the merest scratch of a furrow. I could not but approach the man and exchange words with him; […] and when his speech fell upon my ear, it was as though I listened to one of the ancestors of our kind. Stopping in his work, he answered my inquiries with careful civility; […] on the whole he made himself quite intelligible, and was glad, I could see, when my words proved that I understood him. […] Never have I seen man so utterly patient, so primaevally deliberate.[31]

Gissing and Verga involve the reader in the rural context, but the English writer employs a great many details to express his warm impressions of the people and of the things he sees. Moreover, the people in Gissing's diary are endowed with a respectable spiritual depth, whereas the ones depicted by the Italian writer are nearly compared to animals. They are portrayed as beasts in the fields and the reader cannot but look at the painful events that characterise their lives. The ineluctability of their lot is often shown at the beginning of the stories themselves. Verga, in the first section of "Malaria," explains that malaria is an inescapable disease in some parts of Sicily: "È che la malaria v'entra nelle ossa col pane che mangiate, […]. Invano Lentini, e Francofonte, e Paternò, cercano di arrampicarsi come pecore sbrancate sulle prime colline che scappano dalla pianura, […]; la malaria acchiappa gli abitanti per le vie spopolate, e li inchioda dinanzi agli usci delle case scalcinate […]" (You know, malaria penetrates your bones through the bread you eat, […]. Lentini, and Francofonte, and Paternò try in vain to cling, like sheep taken from the flock, onto the first hills which escape from the plain, […]; malaria catches the inhabitants along the desolate streets, and pins them against the doors of the seedy houses […]).[32]

Another example of Verga's emotional detachment is represented by the description of Rosso Malpelo ("Red-haired Malpelo"), the eponymous character of one of the short stories included in the 1880 collection *Vita dei campi (Life of the Fields)*. Once again, derogatory adjectives are not spared by the writer to introduce the 'anti-hero' who works in a sandpit:

> Egli era davvero un brutto ceffo, torvo, ringhioso, e selvatico. Al mezzogiorno, mentre tutti gli altri operai della cava si mangiavano in crocchio la loro minestra, […] egli andava a rincantucciarsi col suo corbello fra le gambe, per rosicchiarsi quel suo pane […], come fanno le bestie sue pari; e ciascuno gli diceva la sua motteggiandolo, e gli tiravan dei sassi, finchè il soprastante lo rimandava al lavoro con una pedata.
>
> (He was really an ugly mug, grim, snappish, and savage. At noon, when all the other sandpit workers clustered to eat their soup, […] he snuggled up with his round basket between his legs, to nibble at his piece of bread […], as the beasts like him do; and everyone mocked him, and threw stones at him, until the master kicked him to work).[33]

The veristic language highlights the protagonist's brutish existence; the author is willing to uglify Malpelo and to highlight the workers' bestial habits. The story contains other no less depreciatory words to describe the people's animal-like living conditions. The author's impersonal style actually aims to depict the setting as it appears and to spontaneously illustrate the main social issues of the Sicilian context. The author maintains an impartial language even when he tells about Malpelo's death in the sandpit, an event nobody is concerned with:

> Invece, le ossa le lasciò nella cava, Malpelo, come suo padre, ma in modo diverso. […] Malpelo non aveva nemmeno chi si prendesse tutto l'oro del mondo per la sua pelle, […]. [Malpelo] Prese gli arnesi di suo padre, il piccone, la zappa, la lanterna, il sacco col pane, e il fiasco del vino, e se ne andò: né più si seppe nulla di lui. Così si persero persin le ossa di Malpelo, […].
>
> (Instead, Malpelo left his bones in the sandpit, like his father, but in a different way. […] Not even by all treasures on earth would a man care for Malpelo's skin, […]. [Malpelo] took his father's tools, the hack, the hoe, the lantern, the sack of bread, and the flask of wine, and he went away: nobody ever knew anything about him. So, even Malpelo's bones were lost, […]).[34]

Such blunt language, which compares the protagonist to an animal, emphasises the social and cultural backwardness of the context. Unlike Gissing, whose account recreates his linguistic *Otherness*, his linguistic estrangement, Verga's approach is characterised by his identification with the cultural and linguistic context of his native land, Sicily. The emotional estrangement which ensues, owing to his impersonal style, makes the narrative 'environment' so inhuman that the reader cannot but look at the events and witness the characters' sad lot. There is neither a 'hosted' language nor a 'hosting' language in Verga's short stories. The Italian writer uses numerous archaic expressions and an impersonal, detached style to generate a sense of estrangement and powerlessness on the reader's part, due to the lack of any emotional involvement. The two writers offer different views of the Southern Italian regions they describe. Gissing's linguistic *Otherness* is a means to explore and penetrate the Southern social and cultural context; at the same time, it does not prevent the author from expressing his emotional involvement, because he was never more alive than when he was experiencing his Southern Italian journey. Linguistic *Otherness* indeed spurs the writer to appreciate the local culture and habits; linguistic diversity raises his interest in exploring whatever concerns the descendants of Magna Graecia. Verga's emotional *Otherness* aims to highlight the worst aspects of the Sicilian context. Adopting Bhabha's theories on *Otherness* and discrimination, the Sicilians' cultural inferiority is emphasised by the Italian writer and they are, as a consequence, "[…] most often objects of hate."[35] Sicilian workers are doomed to a lower status and are,

to borrow Bhabha's words again, "[…] mystical, primitive, simple-minded […]."[36] Such cultural inferiority stands out in Gissing's work as well, since the English writer focuses on the backward context of the regions he visits. However, he recognises the Southerners' intellectual origins by investigating their linguistic *Otherness* and sublimates their lower status as a result of their enviable origins, which make them sensitive to human relationships and to abstract discourses. For this reason, Gissing's Southerners epitomise the noble savage, as people who do not live in an advanced human society but whose origins ennoble them. The Southern noble savage who emerges in *By the Ionian Sea* often impresses because of his or her sophisticated language, is rustic, lives in harmony with nature, conveys innocence in his or her speech, is generous and helpful, shows moral courage, wisdom and spontaneity. On the other hand, Verga's characters are 'pure' savages or might be 'pure' savages, owing to the writer's antiphrastic language, which emphasises the characters' moral ambiguity. Verga's description of Malpelo, for instance, questions Malpelo's morality and behaviour, and the reader may not be able to realise whether it is Malpelo's behaviour that is wrong or the judgmental attitude of the local community.

The two narrators' linguistic approaches differ when they deal with the description of women too, who often appear in their works. Although Verga seems to show more involvement in the presentation of the eponymous protagonist of the short story "Nedda" (from 1874: as I said, Verga's voice can be perceived at times in his works), the Southern women introduced in *By the Ionian Sea* are portrayed with much more dignity and respect. Nedda, an olive harvester who loses her lover and her baby: "Era una ragazza bruna, vestita miseramente, dall'attitudine timida […]. Forse sarebbe stata bella, se gli stenti e le fatiche non avessero alterato profondamente non solo le sembianze gentili della donna, ma direi anche la forma umana" ([She] was a dark-haired girl, poorly dressed, always looking shy […]. She would have probably been good-looking, if hardships and privations had not deeply altered not only her gentle look, but also, I would say, her human shape).[37] In spite of the presence of the authorial voice, which is perceptible in the use of adjectives and in the expression of his opinion on the girl's appearance, Nedda compares unfavourably with the women farmers presented by Gissing: "In these garden walks I met a group of peasants, evidently strange to Cosenza, […] The women wore a very striking costume: […]. I observed among them a grave, intelligent type of countenance, handsome and full of character, […]. With pleasure I saw that they behaved gently to their beasts, the mules being very sleek and contented-looking."[38] Gissing's language focuses on the objective description of the people he sees and, at the same time, is imbued with his emotional participation. The language

of *By the Ionian Sea* reflects the author's sense of marginalisation, which he shares with Southern Italian people. To concur with Arlene Young's assertion, "Gissing brings to his novels all the insecurities of a man on the margins, a man whose intelligence and classical education could not, in his own mind at least, allow him to transcend his lower-middle-class origins."[39] Verga does not share anything with his people and his language sounds judgmental, since it condemns his characters from the beginning of the stories. It is the mere expression of Social Darwinism and of the principle of the survival of the fittest. However, the reader cannot easily find out whether the Sicilian writer voices the local community's thoughts or whether those words are uttered by the writer himself. Nedda, who breast-feeds her baby on blood, cannot avoid her destiny and is left alone, unable to set forth any words: "Adesso, quando cercava del lavoro, le deridevano in faccia, […] ella non osò cercare più oltre, e si chiuse nella sua casipola, come un uccelletto ferito che va a rannicchiarsi nel suo nido" (Now, when she was looking for some work, everybody mocked her, […] she did not dare look for anything else, and shut herself up into her little house, like a wounded little bird which goes into its nest).[40]

The people's expressive and linguistic means peak when their voices 'cluster' in the whirlpool of their anger during the violent social protests that both writers describe. These 'explosive' moments of voices and languages emerge when the writers dwell on particular social tensions. Gissing writes: "[…] a crowd of poor folk had gathered before the Municipio to demonstrate against an oppressive tax called the *fuocatico*. […] But the hungry plebs of Cotrone lacked vigour for any effective self-assertion; they merely exhausted themselves with shouting '*Abbass' 'o sindaco!*'"[41] In the short story, "Quelli del colera," ("The Cholera spreaders"), published in the 1887 collection *Vagabondaggio* (*Vagrancy*), Verga describes the crowd assailing a family of comics, who went from town to town to perform with their puppets. The family was deemed to be responsible for the spread of cholera: "A un tratto udirono gridare: – Dàlli! Dàlli! – e videro la folla inferocita che correva per sbranarli. […] Arrivò una prima sassata, che fece colare il sangue. […] la gente in mucchio accapigliandosi, gli strilli delle vittime, che si udivano più forte" (Suddenly, they [the family] heard shouting: – Beat them! Beat them! – and they saw the incensed crowd running towards them to tear them to pieces. […] A first stone was thrown, and blood spilt. […] clusters of people tussled with one another, the victims' screams could be heard louder).[42] Although *Otherness* emerges in different ways in the two writers, marking the linguistic aspects in Gissing and the emotional estrangement in Verga, the choral quality of the works stands out as the narrators' and the crowd's voices merge, thus showing not only "[…] the heteroglossic and dialogic nature of Gissing's

writing,"[43] as Hutcheon argues, but also Verga's double/multi-voiced writing. *Otherness* leads to the intertwinement of voices and languages; it is, again in Bhabha's words, "[…] the *content* of Orientalism as the unconscious repository of fantasy, imaginative writings and essential ideas […]."[44] *Otherness* originates from the synchronic encounter among voices, languages and points of view, but it is rooted in the diachronic mazes of the histories of Southerners, who descend from the ancient Oriental world. Such histories are connected with the social inequalities in Verga's work and with the linguistic and cultural origins of Gissing's people. The crowd, as it occasionally appears in both works, is the expression of an explosion of languages, narrating voices, points of view in the Italian writer, and represents the encounter between the 'hosting' language and the 'hosted' language in *By the Ionian Sea*, where the investigation into different linguistic territories paves the way for the writer's cultural involvement in an*other* context. Gissing's work inherits from Verga's stories the 'assemblage' of perspectives, spaces, places, popular phrases, and transplants them into the imaginary voices of the past, in order to make linguistic heterogeneity the hermeneutic means to comprehend the present context. Finally, I am convinced that it is no way an exaggeration to regard *By the Ionian Sea* as a linguistic experiment which Gissing carries out to compare different cultural environments – a rather unique attempt for a *fin-de-siècle* work.

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[1] Cf. Peter Morton, *Revisiting 'By the Ionian Sea.' In Gissing's Footsteps to Magna Graecia* (online book review) at https://sites.google.com/site/petermortonswebsite/home/george-gissing-homepage/revisiting-by-the-ionian-sea (accessed 10 July 2020).

[2] Cf. *George Gissing, Il sale della terra*, E. Ettorre (a cura di), P. Coustillas (intr.). Pescara: Tracce, 2000, pp. 20-21 and Vincenzo Pepe, "Gissing and Naples," *Gissing Journal*, 52:1 (January 2018), p. 41.

[3] Maria Teresa Chialant, "George Gissing, Greece and the Mediterranean Passion," *Literary Geographies*, 3:2 (2017), p. 154.

[4] Cf. *By the Ionian Sea*, p. 155.

[5] As to the combination of subjective and objective elements in Gissing's narrative, cf. Emanuela Ettorre, "*The Nether World* and the Abysmal Topography of Human Negativity," *RSV*, 9:17 (January 2004), pp. 49-52 and Aaron Matz, "George Gissing's Ambivalent Realism," *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 59:2 (September 2004), pp. 212-248. Also, Foley states that "Realism was, for Gissing, the artist's best hope for artistic freedom" [Ashar Foley, "George Gissing's Dullness by Design," *Gissing Journal*, 54:3 (July 2020), p. 17]. As regards the relationship between biography and fiction in Gissing's works, cf. Amanda Kotch, "George Gissing and the Fictional Work of Biography," *SEL*, 55:4 (Autumn 2015), pp. 879-897.

[6] Cf. Emanuela Ettorre, "George Gissing's 'nomadic thought' and the Vibrant Experience of *By the Ionian Sea*," *Gissing Journal*, 51:4 (October 2017), p. 4.

[7] George Gissing, *By the Ionian Sea. Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy*, ed. by Thomas B. Mosher. Evanston, Illinois: The Marlboro Press, 1996, pp. 4-5. All subsequent quotations will be from this edition.

[8] *By the Ionian Sea*, pp. 10-11. Cf. Michele Russo, "Gissing e l'Italia," *Traduttologia*, 1:2 (January 2006), p. 157.

[9] *By the Ionian Sea.*, p. 27. [10] *Ibid.*, p. 29. [11] *Ibid.*, p. 37. [12] *Ibid.*, p. 36. [13] *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76. [14] *Ibid.*, p. 76. [15] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

[16] Cf. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994, pp. 94-120. [17] *Ibid.*, p. 94. [18] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[19] *By the Ionian Sea*, p. 31. [20] *Ibid.*, p. 127. [21] *Ibid.*, p. 128. [22] *Ibid.*, p. 131. [23] *Ibid*. [24] *Ibid.*, p. 132.

[25] Cf. Paola Zaccaria, *La lingua che ospita. Poetiche. Politiche. Traduzioni*. Milano: Meltemi, 2017, pp. 36-37.

[26] *By the Ionian Sea*, pp. 108-109.

[27] Cf. Francesco Badolato, *George Gissing romanziere del tardo periodo vittoriano*. Catanzaro: Rubbettino, 2005, and Massimo Natale, *George Gissing ed Emile Zola*. Roma: Ilmiolibro Self-Publishing, 2013.

[28] *By the Ionian Sea*, pp. 72, 77.

[29] Giovanni Verga, *Novelle*. Volume primo, ed. by Leonardo Sciascia and Giulio Carnazzi, Milano: BUR, 2001, p. 262. All subsequent quotations will be from this edition. The Italian translations of the passages from the short stories are mine.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 263-264.[31] *Ibid.*, p. 28. [32] *Ibid.*, pp. 262-263. [33] *Ibid.*, p. 173. [34] *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

[35] *The Location of Culture*, p. 112.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 118. In this regard, cf. Romano Luperini, "Giovanni Verga. Saggi (1976-2018)" at https://www.letture.org/giovanni-verga-saggi-romano-luperini (accessed 20 July 2020).

[37] *Novelle*. Volume primo, p. 8.

[38] *By the Ionian Sea*, p. 20.

[39] Arlene Young, "'Honest deception': Class and Character in George Gissing's *Will Warburton*," *RSV*, 9:17 (January 2004), p. 109.

[40] *Novelle*. Volume primo, p. 30. [41] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[42] *Novelle*. Volume secondo, p. 147.

[43] Rebecca Hutcheon, "*Born in Exile*, Bakhtin, and the Double-Voiced Discourse of the Epistolary Form," *Gissing Journal*, 51:2 (April 2017), p. 8.

[44] *The Location of Culture*, p. 102.

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Notes and News

Call for Papers, Gissing session at Northeast MLA, Philadelphia, 14-17/3/2021; also Information on Historic Rugby TN

Abstracts for papers on George Gissing are sought for a Gissing panel at the Northeast Modern Language Association Conference, to be held March 11-14, 2021 (still planned to be in person and not virtual at this time). To submit you must go to the NeMLA website at http://www.buffalo.edu/nemla/convention/callforpapers/submit.html.

Abstract

George Gissing is one of the most important Victorian novelists, but is still remarkably unknown, for a writer as prolific and provocative as he is in works like *The Odd Women* and *New Grub Street*. Novels like *Demos* and *Thyrza* are important to the history not just of philosophies of Positivism but for the history of the three-volume novel. Themes like alienation, sexuality, the New Woman, and marriage are prominent, and treated in a way surprisingly

relevant to today. His critical book on Charles Dickens and connections and textual intersections with friends like Eduard Bertz and H. G. Wells offer rich possibilities for stimulating paper presentations.

Description
George Gissing is still remarkably unknown, for a writer as prolific and provocative as he is in works like *The Odd Women* and *New Grub Street*. Papers are sought on his works – especially the lesser known, like his novels *Demos*, *Thyrza*, and critical book on Charles Dickens – connections with and textual intersections with friends like Eduard Bertz and H. G. Wells; themes like alienation, sexuality, and the New Woman in his works, his short stories, etc. Genre studies are also possible since, like Thomas Hardy, Gissing witnessed the death of the three-volume novel.

Professor Josephine McQuail, who sent me the above call for papers, also writes: "Incidentally, I live about an hour from the British 'colony' established by M.P. and author Thomas Hughes, Rugby, TN, where, of course, Eduard Bertz served as librarian. I am also on the Board of Directors, and it is a historic village with ample space for a small conference or retreat. I know it is rather far from England, but it is definitely an unusual place with an undeniable Gissing connection! Rugby is about an hour from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, the state of Tennessee's 'flagship' university, and also one hour away from my own state university, Tennessee Technological University. Historic Rugby would love to host or meet scholars who wish to visit a preserved 1880s Victorian village, whether virtually or in person!"

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Recent Publications

Volumes

Christine DeVine, *Class in Turn-of-the-century Novels of Gissing, James, Hardy and Wells*. Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2020. Pp. 170. ISBN 978138619081. PB. £34.99.

Rebecca Hutcheon, *Writing Place: Mimesis, Subjectivity and Imagination in the Works of George Gissing*. Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2020. Pp. 248. ISBN 9780367592646. PB. £36.99.

Frederick Nesta, *George Gissing, Grub Street, and The Transformation of British Publishing* (Writers and Their Contexts). Brighton: Edward Everett Root Publishers Co. Ltd, 2020. Pp. 256. ISBN 9781913087494. HB. £85.

Martin Ryle and Jenny Bourne Taylor (eds)., *George Gissing: Voices of the Unclassed*. Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2020. Pp. 173. ISBN 9781138619760. PB. £34.99.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Angelica Cofer, "A Woman's Education & Class in George Gissing's *The Odd Women*," *Medium*, 26 May 2020. Online at https://medium.com/foliage blog/a-womans-education-class-in-george-gissing-s-the-odd-women-e96c 06323ccf.

Ian Cutler, *The Lives and Extraordinary Adventures of Fifteen Tramp Writers from the Golden Age of Vagabondage* (Port Townsend, WA, USA: Feral House, 2020). Chapter two deals with Morley Roberts' tramping experience in Canada and North America between 1884 and 1886.

Alora Hayward, "The 'New Fallen Woman' in George Gissing's *The Odd Women*," *Crossings* (University of Winnipeg), 4 (April 2020), pp. 51-69.

J. C., "Gissing Minor," *Times Literary Supplement*, 31 July 2020, p. 32.

Sebastian Kaufmann, "Barbaren des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts. Neobarbarismen im Ausgang von Nietzsche (Eduard Bertz, Gottfried Benn, Götz Kubitschek, Jack Donovan)," in Hannah Berner, Julian Reidy, Melanie Rohner, and Moritz Wagner (eds), *Narren, Götter und Barbaren: Ästhetische Paradigmen und Figuren der Alterität in komparatistischer Perspektive* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2020), pp. 305-322.

Tom Ue, "Motherhood, Gender, and Silence in George Gissing's *Sleeping Fires* (1895) and Arthur Conan Doyle's 'The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire' (1924)" in Nicola Darwood, W. R. Owens, and Alexis Weedon (eds), *Fiction and 'The Woman Question' from 1850 to 1930*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020, pp. 71-85.

Jason Wilson, "The Healing Power of Birdsong," *Standpoint*, May 2020, online journal edition. Wilson is concerned here with the writings of W. H. Hudson on birds. He begins the article with the headline "The ornithologist W. H. Hudson sought wilderness in the city. It is as if he was writing for us today." He gives an overview of the Argentine's life as a naturalist and novelist and then surveys some of the books Hudson wrote on birds.

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Subscriptions

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

Rates per annum are as follows:

Individuals (Europe):	£17
Libraries (Europe):	£24
Individuals (ROW):	£21
Libraries (ROW):	£26

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

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Information for Contributors

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

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