

THE GISSING NEWSLETTER

“More than most men am I dependent on sympathy to bring out the best that is in me.”
– George Gissing’s *Commonplace Book*.

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The Emancipated

C. J. Francis
University of Newfoundland

Most will agree that after *The Nether World* Gissing had “written himself out” on slum life, the working class and such themes with which he had hitherto been identified. However, it would be a radical error to suppose that *The Emancipated* does no more than fill a gap occasioned by its author’s having used up his previous subject matter. The novel is a little overshadowed by the intensity of its predecessor, and by the fame of its successor *New Grub Street*; critics have been unenthusiastic about it, perhaps because, like Oswald Davis, they thought it “out of the characteristic Gissing vein.” (1) Yet to me it seems to represent, not a negative, but a very positive,

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Editorial correspondence should be sent to the editor:
10, rue Gay-Lussac, 59110-La Madeleine, France,
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change of subject and approach, and to incorporate more advances in competence at once than any other single novel.

To begin with, the escape it offers the reader from the claustrophobic mood of the previous novels, – in all aspects, setting, subject, tone, feeling, – is quite remarkable, like a cool drink or a cleansing shower: it breathes freedom as does no other, and this gives point to its theme and the arguments about free choice and determinism which fill it. Spiritual sources are not far to seek. If Gissing’s first reaction to his wife’s death had been anger and despair, expressed in *The Nether*

World, there must also have been release, to be felt more and more as time passed. As important as the removal of emotional fetters – he might have judged it more important – there was at last some relief from the restrictions of circumstance, more money and most important of all, that on which he spent his freedom and his money, the trip to Italy at long last; the reality of art, antiquities and the setting of classical history which had always at second hand formed the most enjoyable, though not the most essential, part of his mental make-up; and modern Italy itself, more present in this book than even the antique: life, gaiety, beauty, sunshine and fresh air. From Clerkenwell to Capri is a long trip in many ways, and we may be grateful that he took his reader with him.

The broadening of viewpoint and calm of mind which all this implies shows itself in a notable advance in objectivity and balance, and, specifically, in a near elimination from his narrative of the author's address to the reader. This implies confidence in the power of material and presentation to communicate his thoughts; and I find in this novel a sense of artistic security, a tone of confidence, a solidity of evaluation, which had previously been missing from Gissing's work even where such confidence would have been justified. It shows, for instance, in the competence, the elegance and point, of the prose he now uses, and in many aspects of technique evident in this most controlled,

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cool and detached work.

Not separate from tone, but part of it, the atmosphere and the setting which largely produces the atmosphere. We can see in *The Nether World* and the first part of *Thyrza* Gissing's growing competence in blending into a single effect emotional response to the physical background of the action and to the states of mind of the characters; a primary skill of any novel-writing advanced beyond simple narrative, but in Gissing by no means merely an artistic device and as divorced as possible from a pathetic fallacy, for his characters of course are greatly influenced by the environment even as are the readers. Gissing's recreation of the Italian scene is not therefore arbitrary, is not, as it is in so many novels, the mere using of conveniently available material of interest, "local colour," in a manner mostly unconnected with theme and action. (Gissing is not always innocent of this fault, evidently; the Athenian background in *Sleeping Fires* is an instance; but here background is fully functional as environment and as symbol.)

Essential to the plan of the book is the effect on the characters of the Italian ambience, in contrast to some northern settings in which industrial Lancashire figures strongly, having nurtured variously the personalities of almost all the main characters. There are also in the latter part of the book many London scenes, and – making a slightly different point – references to the northern scenery which Mallard for preference paints. These scenes are mostly dark, enclosed, claustrophobic as always; dull skies, rain, cold, polluted atmospheres, dusk, and a recurrence of references which less directly suggest the same things – lamps and blinds, street lamps, coal fires, the making of tea. Few things in Gissing are more simply effective than the three paragraphs which recount the Spences' return to London in Part II, chapter X, to a cold, dull, airless atmosphere, a vacant house full of ill-arranged furniture, "... but one could heap coals on all the fires, and draw down the blinds as soon as possible, and make a sort of Christmas evening."

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These scenes nevertheless take second place to the Italian ones, – only, they are not to be dismissed merely as contrast, nor are they settings from which the characters may be considered to have "emerged." The characters are not butterflies, although a different kind of satirist might have made some of them so. They are to return, variously to their English backgrounds, there to test

whether such values as they have acquired or seem to have acquired in Italy can stand transference. Here, perhaps, the significance of Mallard's northern paintings, and of his eventual completion of the interrupted work at Naples, that as man and artist he can encompass the full range of experience, neither failing the two kinds of test, the gay and the severe, nor through egoism remaining untouched by experience as for instance are Marsh, Mrs. Lessingham and Mr. Musselwhite.

It is important to understand that Mallard is wholly involved in experience. His maturity is such that one is tempted, in visualizing the pattern of the novel, to allocate him a position of superior, even God-like, detachment; and possibly from some such motive in the author there are certain false notes; but he is not eventually meant to be superior in this way. That position of self-sufficiency is in fact held by Edward and Eleanor Spence, in a properly subordinated supporting role. They excepted, all the leading characters at the beginning of the book are in process of arriving in Italy and, like the reader, coming under the influence of Italian scenery, life and art – undergoing much the same set of experiences as are met by George Eliot's Dorothea in *Middlemarch*; a common phenomenon of the time, no doubt. They are not all aware that some of their mental attitudes are stimulated to growth by this climate; nor indeed except on reflection does the reader always perceive that at once. Gissing traces quite closely the influences on Miriam Baske, – for this purpose to be considered his demonstration specimen, – but otherwise leaves us to draw our own conclusions. These must be that those characters who are open to new experience are being stimulated to emotions not normal in them and sometimes extravagant, – in Mallard's case an

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ill-judged and Schopenhauerian infatuation with his ward Cecily, – and that the setting is largely responsible for this as it is for the changes in Miriam; always allowing that in each case the seeds of the development are already present in the character. One can confirm this by pointing to specific examples of influence: the effect on Reuben Elgar of rain at Amalfi, for instance, or on the romantic imagination of Cecily the influence of Capri and Pompeii – though Gissing makes clear that she contributed here as much as she received.

Listing of specific influences, however, is to direct oneself away from the intention of the work. Gissing is giving us no pedestrian illustration of the deterministic argument which runs throughout the book. It is in any case an unsettled argument, of course; implicit in all Gissing's studies of environmental influence, and therefore here also, it gains particular prominence in this novel through Elgar's use of it to justify his failings (thus illustrating the notorious paradox by which a belief in determinism becomes a determining factor); and is also important here, perhaps, because the concept "emancipation," involves that of "freedom," and free will. But Gissing, though he cannot ever fail to perceive the logical consequences of any ideas his novels may hold, is more concerned with observed experience than philosophical niceties. "In practice we live as though our will were free," observes Mallard (Vol. I, p. 230) and we shall not get beyond this ordinary truism. Gissing as he must leaves the question open. We can draw our own conclusions about the degree of influence the setting may be having on the characters; Gissing is not insisting on any over-consistent or over-obvious links between influences and effects.

His interest is in the much more subtle way in which a generalized atmosphere can colour and nurture aspects of character that are already present, can incline to rather than direct courses of action. It follows that the characters, very well aware of the Italian atmosphere, are only occasionally and in small degree aware of its gradual effects. Even Elgar, the "determinist by

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instinct," ready enough to link cause and effect when it contributes to a pose, or when he needs an excuse, overlooks the effect on himself of the Italian background, which is to stimulate in him also flights of the romantic imagination which by interacting with those of Cecily bring about their elopement and the mutual illusions of their marriage.

Gissing devotes all his powers to the creation of this functional atmosphere. What he is aiming at is hardly definable: history, beauty, comfort, climate, intellectual freedom, art and scenery, the conditions of life of the English expatriates added to the national flavour of Italy, are all influences not to be catalogued or classified easily. "Atmosphere," however, is a communicated, not an analyzed, experience. Gissing was always, and properly, as much or more concerned to recreate the experience of environment than to explain what it consisted of; only, the influences of the "nether world" with which he had previously been mainly concerned were in their brutal crudity considerably easier to isolate and define, so that this distinction was not over-obvious. In *The Emancipated* we are at once struck with the absence of the elaborate explanatory essay on life in Italy which so easily could have been offered to us.

The secret is that we are given the setting mainly subjectively, as experience of the differing characters which they accept, not without comment by any means, but without any overloading of explanation. Through their walks and journeys, their observations and discussions, the sense of their environment is passed to us involved with their reactions to it. Objective descriptions of scene are not absent, but do not occupy much space, being as a rule justified by being an account of what is seen, and therefore by implication reacted to, by one of the characters; frequently the observing eye belongs to Mallard, landscape artist, whose sensitivity to scene cannot be denied. Sometimes apparent set-piece descriptions contain significant imagery and suggestion of thematic import, such as those in the first chapter.

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Art and antiquity are little described, nor listed, so that Gissing avoids an error made much later in *Veranilda*, the imaginative stimulation afforded by these sights always being in danger of going "dead" when received at second hand. Instead we are kept continually aware of their pervading presence, mainly by the reactions to them of the characters, – not infrequently through the refreshing medium of Jacob Bradshaw, or the close attention of Miriam; and very often the painting, statue, ruin as it might be, is involved in the action. A good example is the Temple of Neptune in Part II, chapter VI, where Mallard, the Spences and Miriam meet; no mere observers, they eat, relax, talk in that setting; no mere setting, the ruins of Paestum are a participant in the scene, an influence on the actors; in a special appeal to the sense, Miriam and Mallard share an experience of feeling the very stones.

These ruins are not dead, in any sense of the epithet; and the most significant effect of Gissing's technique is the feeling of abundant life and enthusiasm in his Italian scenes; a necessary effect, evidently, to convey the thesis that new and fertile, if not always desirable, growth will take place in those exposed to the atmosphere. Gissing has turned to this end the powers that had created the horrors of the nether world. Consider the skill with which, in the first part of chapter V of Part I, not only is there conveyed a Browningsque cumulation of human life and activity, but also the experiencing presence of the observer is made real to us. This sequence – some nine pages, which I refrain from quoting – strikes me as one of the most brilliant things of its kind in Gissing. Mallard, the stroller, is depressed and distraught; the scene cannot totally absorb him; precisely because of this, we are struck by how much it does draw his attention and direct his mood. The effect of the interaction of scene and character is to give scene convincing reality, to turn it from a picture to be inspected to an environment for living. (In noting the part played in this result by references to food,

we may compare *The Nether World*, in which the same symbol had other meaning.)

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Through these techniques, through the varied experiences of a number of different persons, through glimpses of life in Italy as seen by the expatriate (that being the declared subject of the novel), Gissing communicates to us a complex pattern of experiences which we label "atmosphere." Wherever we find a scene which we may be tempted to assess as "local colour," it is worth a question as to its possible further function: for instance, the somewhat inebriated argument between Marsh and the German artists in chapter VI of Part I. It seems to have no part in the action, but no doubt is an accurate report of table conversation at a certain kind of inn. This brief scene, while providing a contrasting background for the more significant conversation between Elgar and Mallard, its lightness illuminating the hidden tensions of the latter, at the same time makes one of the points in the debate about art, shows the superficiality of a certain approach to it, informs us about Marsh, and most important, leaves a strong impression of a free and stimulating intellectual atmosphere in which even so facile paradoxes as these can be flung with gaiety into the face of the accepted.

Davis remarks: "In this novel is a perfect welding of scholarship with story: Mallard's acquaintance with art treasures of the Palazzo Borghese of Rome, and an interlude of work at the easel, help forward the plot. The knowledge is active and fluid, and culture becomes a life-blood in the story instead of a cold stream flowing through it with chilling effect." (2) Something of this I have been trying to say: not only "culture" in the sense of art and antiquity but the whole Italian experience in all senses pervades the book both as image of themes and as environment in which they can develop.

To me this is the notable achievement of the novel, but it has other virtues also. Unity of theme and embodiment of theme in action as well as in setting and atmosphere is most satisfactory. Specific and interlinked debates – determinism and free will, puritanism and free thought, art and morality, morality and prudery, freedom and libertinism, and the like – all arise naturally from

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characters and situation, all in their exposition involve development of characters and relationships, all are connected into the single main theme of "emancipation."

The ambiguities of that word are evidently intended: its plain sense is, achieved freedom from the restrictions of conventional thought, of various kinds; but Gissing recognises the complexity of the process. Miriam, for instance, appears to us at first an example of one freeing herself from the excesses of Dissenting puritanism, and the narrow habits of thought belonging to them. This she succeeds in, but this by itself is not emancipation; it remains to correct the faults of character that her upbringing in the religiosity of Bartles has occasioned, and which remain to her, naturally, after her attachment to those particular ideals has gone: to wit, prideful arrogance, envy, jealousy, excessive consciousness of others' opinion, disingenuousness, insincerity – all the attributes of an upbringing fundamentally hypocritical, devoted to appearances, to the pretence of religious earnestness. The perception that emancipation is of character, and runs deeper than acceptance or rejection of concepts and conventions, is what this book is about. Thus Mallard pictures Miriam in the final stage of development that he foresees:

"She is 'emancipated,' in the true sense of the hackneyed word; that is to say,

she is not only freed from those bonds that numb the faculties of mind and heart, but is able to control the native passions that would make a slave of her." III.272

It follows from this that, of many characters, the word "emancipated" is used (or its use implied) ironically. Not of the Spences, fully in control of themselves, and freed even of pride, ambition or the desire for gain – they are Schopenhauerian quietists. Only with slight irony of Mallard, although there are things of which he too must free himself; but of Miriam in that her intellectual precedes her emotional emancipation; of such as Reuben and Cecily in that freedom from common rules of

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behaviour leaves them at the mercy of their own wills, which for different reasons they are incompetent to control. The term is ironic in a simpler sense of examples of incomplete emancipation, such as the "double standard" which Reuben applies to his marriage, showing that the theories of moral freedom he uses to justify himself are not genuinely felt; or the pretences and moral confusions of Mrs. Lessingham; of appearances such as those of Marsh, self-idealizing, or of the Denyer girls whose intellectual pretensions are subordinate to a conventional hunt for marriage; and of the clash of theory with reality as Cecily is faced with the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood.

"Cecily did not represent that extreme type of woman to whom the bearing of children has become in itself repugnant; but she was very far removed from that other type which the world at large still makes its ideal of the feminine. With what temper would she have heard the lady in her aunt's drawing-room, who was of opinion that she should 'stay at home and mind the baby'? Education had made her an individual; she was nurtured into the disease of thought. This child of hers showed in the frail tenure on which it held its breath how unfit the mother was for fulfilling her natural functions." II.232-3.

I quote this because it epitomizes a source of possible error about the author's meaning and intention. Much of what he has to say concerning "emancipation" in Cecily, and other female characters, overlaps considerably with that concern for the rights of women known now as "women's liberation," which he was to deal with much more thoroughly and soundly in *The Odd Women*. Nevertheless Gissing in this book is little concerned with the rights of women, a great deal with the problems of the individual. To suppose otherwise might cause one to attribute to him a much more "reactionary" view than is justified; to argue that Cecily's failure as wife and mother is meant to demonstrate the old-fashioned thesis that education is bad for young girls and freedom of

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thought disastrous – to which it would be possible to add other selected evidence, such as the failures of Jessica Morgan in *In the Year of Jubilee*, or of Alma Rolfe in *The Whirlpool*. An enthusiast for women's liberation might indignantly point to the remark about Cecily's being "unfit ... for fulfilling her natural functions" as a clear example of blind traditionalism.

By "natural," however, Gissing means something nearer "physical" than "rightful." He had shortly before spoken of "slavery of nature," and announced that the average maternal women found motherhood "a relief from the weariness of her unfruitful mind." (II.231-2) Clearly he does not support the traditional view of women's "place," and his study of the education of Miriam

Baske illustrates that.

Why, then, the failure of Cecily? The key is in the words “nurtured into the disease of thought.” We may never forget that large in the foreground of Gissing’s view of his society looms the *déraciné*, the character, certainly not always male, who through loss of convictions, sanctions and habits of mind has become estranged from his world. Against the few of these who can make a success of their lives by relying on themselves alone, we must set the much larger numbers who cannot. Gissing shows us many forms of social alienation, of which *The Emancipated* has its portion. In one of its few addresses to the reader, Gissing notes:

“life is so simple to people of the old civilization. The rules are laid down so broadly and plainly, and the conscience they have created answers so readily when appealed to. But for these poor instructed persons, what a complex affair has morality become!” ... etc. III.243-4.

Ready enough in appropriate places to argue that conditions should be different, Gissing remains primarily concerned with the person who cannot cope with conditions as they are. Without custom and convention on the one hand, nor on the other any guiding allegiance, such as Mallard has to his art and to the ideal of self-mastery that goes with achievement, these characters must necessarily

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fumble. Gissing does not deny to Cecily the right of self-determination, he merely observes that as an individual she is unable to use that freedom. She might seem to need no guidance; she is equipped with intelligence, self-respect, integrity, honesty, enthusiasm. But her so-called education by Mrs. Lessingham has equipped her with quite insufficient knowledge of the world, grasp of reality. She sees all things on a level of idealism which they cannot possibly maintain, and once she has lost her illusions she will be lost in truth. Her elopement with Reuben occurs partly because of her idealizing of him, partly because the restrictions placed on her by Mallard and Mrs. Lessingham infringe her ideal of freedom, and, final irony, because her ideal vision of her guardian Mallard has been shattered by the attribution to him of personal motives.

When her illusions have been discouraged by the major disappointment of her marriage, all the emancipated opinions she has held, even the sound ones, temporarily are discarded:

“Views’ have become rather a weariness to me.... A woman’s natural lot is to care for her husband and bring up children.” III.78

but, in contradiction of this, when stimulated in a different way, she reverts to vigorous revolt against the fate of women (III. 178-9). These fluctuations indicate her failure to find any sound basis for her life.

(To be continued)

1. - Oswald H. Davis, *George Gissing*, London, 1966, p. 72.
2. - *Ibid.*

* * * * *

Isabel Clarendon and Henry James

Francis Noel Lees
University of Manchester

In the essay which introduces his welcome annotated reprint of Gissing's early novel *Isabel Clarendon*, Pierre Coustillas speaks of the influence of Henry James upon the book: "Under the

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influence of Henry James, Gissing had come to appreciate the virtues of suggestion after succumbing to the charms of explanation and long-winded comment." I suggest that James's influence is palpably present in Gissing's Vincent Lacour; that in fact Vincent Lacour derives directly from Morris Townsend in James's *Washington Square*. *Washington Square* was first published as a serial in *Harper's Monthly* and the *Cornhill* in 1880 and in book form by Harper New York, and Macmillan, London, in 1881, and had been reprinted several times before Gissing began writing *Isabel Clarendon* in 1884. I quote from the pocket edition of 1883 – though James, omitting the novel from his 'New York' edition of 1907-09, did not revise it.

The two fortune-hunting young wooers are manifestly alike in character and function (though Lacour's function is to affect two girls, Ada and Rhoda, while Townsend's is directed to only one, Catherine), and their respective realizations that the presumed fortunes may not materialize are described thus:

Isabel Clarendon, Vol. II, chap. 1: "This meant, of course, that his marriage must be postponed. It was all very well to smile at the extreme improbability of the danger revealed to him, but the recollection of how improbable it had seemed would not go far in the way of consolation if he found himself married to Ada Warren and divorced from her possessions."

Washington Square, chap XXII: "It would be all very well to take one's jump and trust to Providence; Providence was more especially on the side of clever people, and clever people were known by an indisposition to risk their bones. The ultimate reward of a union with a young woman who was both unattractive and impoverished ought to be connected with immediate disadvantages by some very palpable chain."

Lacour, further, intimates "with skilful avoidance of direct falsehood, that he consulted Ada's wish

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in suppressing his own anxiety for a speedy marriage"; while Townsend "avoided, gracefully enough, fixing a day" and "drew back, skilfully enough ... and kept the wedding-day still an open question." The verbal resemblances are accompanied by a coolly ironic use of the indirect-speech rendering of a character's thoughts (or "inner monologue") which is Jamesian in tone – though not seeming alien to Gissing himself. Elsewhere in the novel too, there are signs that a relishing of James's ironic sharpness has been active in Gissing's mind; in the formulation of Ada's early acid observations on people and in the depiction of the young Strattons at their militant play just as *In*

the Year of Jubilee seems to have James – rather than Jane Austen, Thackeray, Dickens or Meredith – behind its satiric sketches, and so too *The Emancipated*.

I would suggest further that supported by this distinct Lacour/Townsend kinship we might identify Isabel Clarendon herself as in some degree the offspring of James's Isabel Archer. *The Portrait of a Lady* (Isabel Archer's book) was published in 1881, following serialization in *Macmillan's Magazine* and *Atlantic Monthly*.

M. Coustillas is right to remark that the influence of Meredith on *Isabel Clarendon* is "undeniable but limited": the temper of Gissing's attitude to the upper-class "society" he here presents is more importantly that of James than that of Meredith. It will be remembered that during Gissing's stay in the United States James's *Roderick Hudson* and *The American* had been serialized in American magazines.

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George Gissing: The Born Exile

A Second View

This intelligent and interesting book aims at relating Gissing's own personality and his life to events and characters in his writings. Owing to the abnormal nature of his experiences, there is perhaps too much temptation to seek autobiographical elements in his fiction and not always to give

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him full credit for invention and creation. The author sees this danger when she writes in her Introduction that "no one – least of all no one who is a novelist – should make the vulgar error of assuming that the novels of Gissing or any other writer are simple *romans-à-clef*, and that it is sufficient to know the events about the writer's own life to make the key work." She then goes on to chide those who make the facile comparison of *Carrie* (*Workers in the Dawn*) with Gissing's first wife Nell and that of *Mr. Hood* (*A Life's Morning*) with Gissing's father. These are not very well chosen examples, as she expounds at some length, later in her book, theories leading to these identical conclusions.

When planning her book, Miss Tindall had to avoid giving long biographical details on Gissing's private life and at the same time to keep clear of making long critical comments on his works. In order to elude this first pitfall, she has begun the volume with ten pages entitled "Digest Biography," which the reader is advised to skip if already familiar with the details. This does not seem very good advice, as anything which an author considers necessary to print should be compulsive reading for all those who take the matter seriously. The briefest of "digests" cannot escape being selective, and the selection may convey impressions which help to explain subsequent attitudes taken by the author. The second pitfall has not always been successfully averted as Miss Tindall goes to some trouble to show why she does not like certain works which have a strong appeal for a number of discerning readers, while others in the same category are dismissed hastily. For instance, she has no use for *The Emancipated*, *Eve's Ransom*, *By the Ionian Sea* and even *Ryecroft*, whereas she gives more patient attention to artificial and sentimental novels like *Thyrza* and *A Life's Morning*. All of this is, of course, a matter of taste, but such choices, however controversial, are inevitably unconvincing to many readers.

Most of the author's interpretations of character and events in Gissing's fiction are well

reasoned and acceptable. One or two objections must, nevertheless, be advanced. For instance, it is not plausible that Gissing was describing, even subconsciously, his own weaknesses when creating Mr. Widdowson (*The Odd Women*). The case of Mr. Hood mentioned in the Introduction is almost certainly in no way inspired by Gissing Senior. It is true that George came to see in later life that his father's intellectual apparatus was not so formidable as he had once supposed, but he did not lose his respect for him. Thomas Waller Gissing was obviously a level-headed, practical person, and no thought of him as being suicidal would ever have entered his son's head. Miss Tindall uses the over-worked Freudian theory of the "father figure" and she seems blinded at times before the fact that much explanation of persons' conduct and motives can more often than not be a matter of mere common sense based on the rules of evidence.

There is too great a tendency in much contemporary criticism to judge writings of the past by present day standards and to analyse characters and motives without regard to the gradual evolution in social conditions, ways of thought and increase in knowledge during the last hundred years. The manner in which many Victorians, both in biography and fiction, with their habits, their motives, their outlook in general, are chastised and branded as false and hypocritical gives the impression that Britain, say in the days of Gissing, stood almost alone in all such wickedness. Those who have never lived in foreign countries and have not been able to study alien civilisations at first hand would be surprised not only at the parallels but also at the more condemnable situation in other lands at the same period. Things may well be ordered better in our enlightened times, but posterity may judge otherwise. This leads one to question whether the fairly recent and persistent introduction of sex into the kind of literature which had hitherto been well able to do without it is essential. It would be unfair to make Freud shoulder the whole responsibility for the fashion of nosing into the secret lives of distinguished Victorians in order to discover traces of formerly

unmentionable vices, particularly all varieties of sexual deviation, but this fashion may become extremely tiresome. Miss Tindall wants to explain too many situations solely from the sexual point of view. One can merely shrug one's shoulders when she suggests that two characters in *The Odd Women* have lesbian leanings and that poor Mrs. Westlake (*Demos*) was of a similar composition, for these are anyhow only fictional creations. Why, however, is she so puzzled at the absence of the sexual element in Gissing's friendship with the admirable Miss Collet? Why does she take so much trouble to insinuate that what is euphemistically termed the "common-law marriage" between Gissing and Gabrielle Fleury was never consummated, when all the evidence contradicts this theory?

Miss Tindall is, as a rule, broad-minded and matter-of-fact. One can pass rapidly over her "leftist" bias against "brutal" public schools, sport in general and what she calls unjustly "the mindless glorification of military aggression" in the late Victorian period (which, after the lesson of the Boer war, became more a period of anxiety for self-defence than of aggressiveness). She defends women's rights stoutly but without the hysteria which is so often associated with campaigns on this subject. One last criticism of her work is that throughout her long analysis of Gissing's character, the tone becomes occasionally almost nagging in exposing him as a muddled and illogical blunderer, too full of self-pity, too much haunted by a "guilty secret," too inclined to whining, too utterly frustrated ... until we reach page 254, when it must come as a surprise to the un-initiated to find that this man, among his friends and family, was "a cheerful joke-loving person," even at times "hilariously mirthful" (Ellen Gissing's words). This could surely have been

more than hinted at earlier, for quite a few of his novels show a high sense of comedy, even of farce in *The Paying Guest*, and there is a humorous scene in *Will Warburton* which might almost have been written by Trollope at the top of his form.

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These few unfavourable comments are not intended as an attack on the book as a whole, for it is full of interest, comes at the right moment of the Gissing revival and should attract more readers to his books. Attempts to classify Gissing as a good, great or inferior writer are an unprofitable task which will never result in general satisfaction. That he is a fascinating subject for study both as a man and as an author is amply proved by Miss Tindall's absorbing pages.

C. S. Collinson

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Notes on *In the Year of Jubilee*

P. F. Kropholler

[The edition referred to is the one-volume English edition, originally published by Lawrence & Bullen in 1895.]

- p. 6, l. 32.

"in maiden meditation." *A Midsummer Night's Dream* II.I.164: "In maiden meditation, fancy free."

- p. 6, l. 34.

"The Mikado." Korg, p.56: "Gissing seldom missed a new opera at the Savoy and he felt a great interest in W. S. Gilbert and his work."

- p. 60, l. 37.

"God so loved the world..." St. John. III.16.

- p. 63, l. 22.

"His tongue bewrayed him for a native of some northern county." Suggestive of "Thy speech bewrayeth thee." St. Matthew, XXVI.73.

- p. 67, l. 18.

"The Monarchy is a great *fact* –, as Gurty would have said." Did Goethe really say this? Barmby's quotations are unreliable.

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- p. 76, l. 19.

"the burly guardians of order dealt thwacking blows ... backed with hearty oaths." Cf. *Commonplace Book*: "English police readily display ruffiandom."

- p. 131, l. 19.

"I understand now what the old poet meant, when he talked of bees seeking honey on his lady's

lips.” This idea occurs in a poem by Robert Herrick “The Captiv’d Bee: or, The Little Filcher.”
While Julia lay “a-slum’bring,” a bee:

took the lip
Of Julia, and began to sip,
But when he felt he suckt from thence
Hony, and in the quintessence:
He drank so much he scarce co’d stir
So Julia took the pilferer.

- p. 145, l. 20.

“In brief, Tarrant had gone forth a bachelor, and came back a married man. Could it be sober fact.”
There are several characters in Gissing who thus propose to a woman on the spur of the moment.
“A Lodger in Maze Pond” describes a typical case.

- p. 146, l. 27.

“The choice ... between making love in idleness, and conscientiously holding aloof.” Apart from
being the name of a flower, “love in idleness” is the title of a poem by Thomas Lovell Beddoes.

- p. 148, l. 5.

“Is not a little knowledge a dangerous thing?” Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, l. 215: “A little learning
is a dang’rous thing.” Apart from a few trite quotations from Pope and Gray’s “Elegy” there are few

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allusions to 18th century literature in Gissing.

- p. 201, l. 18.

“Vixi hodie.” Martial, *Epigrammata*, I.XV: “Vive hodie.”

- p. 214, l. 3.

“Ail, orrors, ail”! A “quotation” from Milton, *Paradise Lost*, book I, l. 250.

- p. 269, l. 13.

“Larger constellations burning....” from Tennyson, “Locksley Hall.”

- p. 279, l. 26.

“in the words of Shakespeare, ‘a liberal education’.” Barmby must have been thinking of Steele:
“To love her was a liberal education,” *Tatler*, No. 49.

- p. 406, l. 9.

“No enemy but winter and rough weather.” Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II.V.7.

- p. 413, l. 26.

“the fool-fury waiting for him at home.” Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, CXXVII: “The red fool-fury of
the Seine.”

- p. 436, l. 5.

“One word is too often profaned.” From Shelley’s “To —”: “One word is too often profaned.”

- The title of the novel, *In the Year of Jubilee*, occurs in The Bible, Leviticus, XXVII, 17 and 24.

- One of the characters (a friend of Tarrant’s) is Harvey Munden. Another Harvey Munden occurs in the short story “A Lodger in Maze Pond.”

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Notes and News

Francis Noel Lees joins in the discussion of Forster-and-Gissing (see April and July numbers) and remarks: “Surely *The Emancipated* is in some of its Italian part reminiscent of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, and this latter was published in 1905, i.e. only a little before Forster’s reference to Gissing in 1906 (as noted by Ann Pilgrim.)”

Francesco Badolato has translated a new batch of Gissing short stories which are to appear in a well-known Italian series under the imprint of EDIPEM. The Italian translation of *Born in Exile* has been reprinted by UTET, but *Il Giornale Intimo di Henry Ryecroft* is now out of print.

The French translation of *New Grub Street*, by Suzanne Calbris and Pierre Coustillas, with an introduction by the latter, is being printed – very slowly – at the University of Lille.

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Recent Publications

Volume

- George Gissing, *Sleeping Fires*, Harvester Press, 1974, £4. With a short preface by Pierre Coustillas. Brown buckram.

Articles, reviews, etc.

- Paul L. Wiley, *The British Novel: Conrad to the Present*, A. H. M. Publishing Corporation, 1973, pp. 47-50.

- Peter Quennell and Hamish Johnson, *A History of English Literature*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1973. Mentions Gissing among Crabbe’s admirers, p. 295, and comments on his achievements, pp. 369-70.

- Sylvère Monod, “Book Reviews,” *Southern Humanities Review*, Spring 1974, pp. 250-53. A review of *George Gissing: Essays and Fiction*.

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- Anon., “General,” *New Yorker*, September 2, 1974. A review of the American edition of Gillian

Tindall's *The Born Exile*.

- Peter Stansky, "The Born Exile," *New York Times Book Review*, September 8, 1974, p. 3. A review of Gillian Tindall's book, with a portrait of Gissing.
- Francesco Badolato, "19mo secola: politica nella letteratura inglese," *Italia Intellettuale*, July-September 1974, p. 16.
- Frank Kermode, "Buyers' Market," *New York Review of Books*, October 31, 1974. A review of *The Born Exile*.
- Anon., "Reviews," *Book Exchange*, October 1974. A review of Joseph J. Wolff's bibliography of Gissing.
- Shigeru Koike, "Politics in Literature in the Nineteenth Century," *Eigo Seinen (The Rising Generation)*, November 1974, p. 385.