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“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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-- 1 --

*New Grub Street* and Juvenal’s *Satire III*

“Free Play Among Classic Ghosts”

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New York

I - Introduction

There is good reason for *New Grub Street* to be George Gissing’s one universally acknowledged masterpiece. Although it has eluded critical attention, the reason lies in the fact that the book is cleverly modeled on a classical rhetorical genre, the Satire. Gissing’s novel, a narrative epic to “the goddess Poverty,” is based chiefly on Juvenal’s *Satire III* which concerns itself with a

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-- 2 --

writer forced by poverty to leave Rome where “Slow rises worth, by Poverty deprest.” These words are Samuel Johnson’s in *London*, 1738, a poem “in imitation of the third satire of Juvenal,”<sup>1</sup> an

imitation with a precedent in Dryden's and Shadwell's translations. Therefore, it is an established literary tradition that is brought up to date in a nineteenth-century version of *Grub Street*. Only a classicist like Gissing would be capable of doing this for his generation, for he was admirably equipped with rhetorical devices inherited from his schooling, which had left on his mind its intensive training unadulterated by additional disciplines usually acquired during a university education which Gissing never had. Damaged by extreme conditions of poverty, as Johnson also had been, and aware of the changing conditions in *Grub Street*, Gissing, who also fancied himself a poet, set himself the task of writing a satirical narrative. All his classical literary mentors, from Homer through Juvenal, helped him fashion it.

In a form beloved by the English polemicists of the neo-classical movements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Juvenal's *Satire III* deals exactly with Gissing's theme: the crushing effect of poverty on a writer living in the metropolis. In Juvenal's poem it drives the writer Umbricius to leave Rome ("Quid Romae Faciam?")<sup>2</sup> and in Johnson's "Imitation" sends the writer Thales from London to "The Wilds of Kent." Gissing's version is of course much more extended, for instead of relying only on 263 lines, he uses a host of other writers, both from the classical world and from the heritage of English literature, to flesh out his analogue so that it can reach the epical status of the contemporary obligatory three-volume novel.

Further, Gissing also employs the important Homeric technique in the *Iliad* of showing how one great force can crush and influence every person and every relation. In the *Iliad* that force is War. In *New Grub Street* that force is "the goddess Poverty," the main presence in the novel whose name appears more often than the names of the human participants on whom Poverty exerts her

-- 3 --

baleful influence. It is not for nothing that Poverty is mentioned almost a hundred times and that, with its adjective "poor" and its ally "money," it determines part of the vocabulary of the book. Gissing's reworking of the classical form is presented as a realistic novel in which the basic analogy is supported at different levels by parallels drawn either from Greek or Latin classics, and from authors steeped in those classics.

It is important for our analysis to know that preparatory to writing his novel Gissing was "saturated" (a word Henry James used about another aspect of Gissing) in the satiric tradition, especially when it paid attention to poverty. His *Diary*, his *Letters* to his family, and his manuscript, *Extracts from My Reading*, show that in the years 1880 to 1891 he was reading those very books which appear mentioned and quoted in *New Grub Street*. It is not by chance that in *Extracts from My Reading* he quotes from the satirists Lucian, Propertius, Juvenal and Martial, and in particular the lines about poverty from Juvenal's *Satire III*:

Haud facile emergunt quorum virtutibus obstat  
Res angusta domi

which we translate, although he did not, into English: "It is no easy matter anywhere, for a man to rise when poverty stands in the way of his merits" (Juvenal, III, 164-165). Gissing eliminates the last part of line 165, "sed Romae durior illis conatus" – "but nowhere is the effort harder than in Rome" – it is, however, implied.

Though *New Grub Street* is basically a satire modeled on the Roman form, it is reinforced by the example of the *Iliad* in its creation of the "goddess Poverty" against which the writers of *New Grub Street* wage battle. They are all mercilessly defeated by Poverty with the exception of the wily Jasper Milvain who, in imitation of Ulysses, learns to keep her at bay (also of the "slave of

women,” Whelpdale, whose low opinion of himself permits him to avoid poverty by writing a scandal-gossip sheet for “the quarter-educated”). The reader is informed throughout the novel of

-- 4 --

Homer’s importance and two episodes from the *Odyssey* as well are blended into the narrative. Once Gissing had decided on the Homeric device of using a relentlessly oppressive force to bear down on his characters, he concentrates on the overall rhetorical device of satire as the generating power in his narrative machinery.

Satire, according to Gilbert Highet, has historically taken three forms: “the diatribe or monologue, the parody and the narrative.”<sup>3</sup> Gissing, whose personal disasters made him rely with intense concentration on the only form his education had taken, a disciplined training in the classics, combined all three forms in his one novel which achieved instant critical acclaim. In what, in *New Grub Street*, he literally called the “free play among classic ghosts” (p. 164), Gissing has coalesced the three forms of satire to make a modern form of the genre.

In the center of Gissing’s satire is the conception of Poverty as a woman which has its precedent in two classical sources that Gissing was reading or rereading just before and during the writing of *New Grub Street*: Plato’s *Symposium* and Lucian’s *Timon*.<sup>4</sup> In the *Symposium* Socrates relates how, on the birthday of Aphrodite, Poverty (or Penia) lay down by the side of the drunken God Plenty (or Poros) and conceived Love. In Lucian’s *Timon* Poverty, also a woman, is presented as a source of virtue,<sup>5</sup> for she has protected the impoverished but once rich Timon who admits, “my good friend Poverty ... conversed with me truthfully and frankly” and has dressed him “in the coat of skin.”<sup>6</sup> This relationship is imitated in Biffen’s embracing Poverty – she gives him material for a novel and the “livery of poverty,” his threadbare overcoat. He alone in *New Grub Street* accepts her.

Gissing’s Poverty is definitely elevated to the stature of a goddess, although we are not certain from Plato or Lucian whether their conceptions of Poverty represent a goddess or not. In *New Grub Street* Poverty has been magnified through the many changes classical rhetoric can perform for her.

-- 5 --

She has been personified, deified, apostrophized. Her power has been felt by everyone in the novel. Jasper Milvain alone learns how to beat Poverty at her own game, while Amy Reardon, who suffered as Hecuba had, losing her entire family in the battle, at least flees from Poverty’s range and finally allies herself with Jasper.

## II - The Goddess Poverty

In Gissing’s story the effects of poverty occur on almost every page, and all action in the novel is determined by its presence. That Gissing was deliberately using poverty as the central core of the book, he tells us himself. He wrote to Eduard Bertz about the reception of *New Grub Street* in April 1891, explaining the connection of his book with the “Grub Street” that “actually existed in London some hundred and fifty years ago,” and adding that he sees it “confined to the sense of poverty.” In dire poverty himself while writing the book, he tells his friend that “a man has to be of much native strength if he can arrive at anything like development of his powers in the shadow of poverty.”<sup>7</sup> One week after he received the proofs for his novel he went for a walk supplied with an inadequate lunch; “Poverty,” he wrote in his *Diary*, “always spoiling things that might be perfect”(D239). Thus poverty shadows the author even beyond the limits of *New Grub Street* for the novel *about* poverty was written in poverty. Here is a striking concurrence of life and art, the result of emotional as well

as literary motivation, and Gissing summons up the “classic ghosts” to support his “snarling Muse,” Johnson’s epithet for satire.<sup>8</sup>

But if Gissing could not control poverty in his own life, he could control it in his art. There is no emotion or characterological trait advanced which is not sooner or later attached to poverty. For instance, the Milvain girls had a “touch of pride which harmonised so ill with the restrictions of poverty”(p. 38). Mrs. Milvain, who wants the return of a loan to her brother-in-law, is discouraged by Jasper: “Poverty doesn’t allow of honourable feeling, any more than of compassion” (p. 41).

-- 6 --

After suffering from lack of money, Amy Reardon decides that if it is a question of choosing between “a glorious reputation with poverty and a contemptible popularity with wealth, [she] should choose the latter” (p. 53). When Reardon is about to be married, he wonders, “How would Amy bear poverty?” (p. 67). A question which introduces the rhetorical classical device of apostrophe – “He knew what poverty means ... Poverty! Poverty!” (p. 68)

And this brings us to Gissing’s artistic control of poverty in *New Grub Street*. What the reader gradually discovers is that on almost every page the word poverty or its adjective, “poor,” occurs, and it is clear that its insistent appearance has some structural purpose. It is the overruling force in *New Grub Street*, and the novel will show its relentless power, a conception borrowed not only from the *Iliad*, but in its details from the literature-laden mind of Gissing. Poverty takes on the merciless machinery of war in the *Iliad* and as war grinds down everybody and every relation in the Homeric epic, so Poverty will ruin all, if not by killing, at least by transforming their personalities.

Once Gissing has decided on a basically classical device, he presses the satiric analogy in his narrative equipment. The controlled way in which Gissing develops the concept, the word, and the figure of Poverty seems to depend on his close familiarity with the well-known classical manuals of the art of rhetoric from Horace to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, both cited in the text. For Poverty is put through all the changes classical rhetoric can create without any deforming coercion of the narrative. They appear quite naturally as the story reaches its climactic points, and it is in the center of the book when Amy leaves Reardon and goes back to “the old home” that Poverty is deified. Amy’s mother orders her servants arrogantly, “so sharp, hard, unrelenting – the voice of the goddess Poverty herself perhaps sounds like that” (p. 255).

The appearance of Poverty in the text has a rhythm of its own. For Poverty does not make its entrance until the prologue is over. That it is Jasper who introduces the word “poverty” into this

-- 7 --

book – “Poverty is the root of all social ills ... There is no word in our language that sounds so hideous to me as ‘Poverty’” (p. 30) – is fitting. That the first mention of the baleful heroine of the book should be a purely linguistic one is part of a carefully calculated narrative strategy. Poverty’s flats are approached by “eight flights of stairs” and a writer’s working habits are determined by “his poverty” as well as by “his temperament.” (p. 46) Poverty is also the cause of the many epigrams of desperation. Both apostrophe and paradox are combined by Reardon who, when he receives some payment for his novel, *Margaret Home*, cries, “Blessed money! root of all good, until the world invent some saner economy” p. (162). As the book progresses Poverty eats into the lives of the characters like a metastatic cancer. The writer who alone does not put up a fight against Poverty but gives in completely to her is Harold Biffen. Since “Biffen was always in dire poverty,” he earns nothing at all but he gets material for his novel *from* poverty, for he deals with the essentially “unheroic,” and Poverty herself determines his field of concentration on the “ignobly decent”

(p. 158). He explains to Reardon, "You are repelled by what has injured you; I am attracted by it" (p. 152).

The power of Poverty not only to move in with her victims but to transform them is presented in the changes in Alfred Yule and in Amy Reardon. "Poverty will make the best people bad, if it gets hard enough" (p. 90). Marian Yule as a little girl asked why her mother didn't speak the way her father and she did. This becomes "one of the myriad miseries that result from poverty," since the child sees that her mother is of a lower class (p. 98). Marian thinks that her father "was not the only one to suffer from the circumstances in which poverty had involved him," for her mother's impoverished background plus his failure as a writer determine his personality. In Alfred Yule's family there are three people whom Poverty involves. The chapter introducing father, mother and daughter is called "The House of Yule," an example of paronomasia, or "word shunting," making a

-- 8 --

satirical use of the similarity between this phrase and "The House of Atreus." Once this is understood by the reader the relations of the three Yules are placed analogically into the Greek tragic form. Jocasta, Oedipus's wife who is really his mother, is loosely recreated in Mrs. Yule, whose uneducated speech has prevented her husband's climb into power in the literary world. Since Alfred will become blind and therefore totally dependent on his daughter with whom he moves away from London, the analogy is intensified. We are so directed by Biffen's request for a volume of Sophocles (p. 149).

The conception of poverty now invades all the thoughts of all the characters and its function is described in closer and closer relation to their lives. Poverty literally moves in with the Reardons and is present every moment of their lives; "so far from helping him to support poverty, she [Amy] perhaps would even refuse to share it with him" (p. 167). He begins to dislike his child. "But for the child, mere poverty... should never have sundered them." His son Willie "had come between him and the mother, as must always be the case in poor homes, most of all where the poverty is relative" (p. 133). In the Yule household, it loosened the bond between father and daughter. The effect of Poverty on both these families is divisive, putting one member against the other.

Amy, who "can't bear poverty. I have found that I can't bear it ... It brings out all the worst things in me," adds, "Was there ever a man who did as much as you have done in literature and then sank into hopeless poverty?" (p. 209). The next day the couple rail at the rich in true Juvenal fashion: "between wealth and poverty is just the difference between the whole man and the maimed." Reardon sees his experience only "through the medium of poverty" (p. 211). "The curse of poverty is to the modern world just what that of slavery was to the ancient," and he quotes Homer on the demoralizing effect of enslavement. But the most tragic action of Poverty for a writer is how she destroys whatever talents he has, if he resists her. Reardon complains that "not he had

-- 9 --

written this book, but his accursed poverty" (p. 219). Poverty now even *writes* books! But Biffen, who works with her, she leads to a success, whereas Reardon she abandons to failure.

Poverty is now ready to reveal her godhead and it is a sign of Gissing's formal and satiric skill that she is assimilated to his hero's mother-in-law at the same time that she is deified and personified as "the goddess Poverty" (p. 255) as she is in the classic authors Gissing read. We had been introduced to Amy and Reardon in Chapter IV, "An Author and his Wife," with an opening sentence beginning, "Eight flights of stairs, consisting alternately of eight and nine steps" (p. 45). Now, in Amy's mother's house at the point of climax, when Poverty has sundered the marriage

completely, the figure is reversed. “From step to step of descent, till here was downright catastrophe” (p. 253). His wife now gone – “Love is one of the first things to be frightened away by poverty” (p. 271) – Reardon finds himself alone with the unspeakable Goddess, for he “has made up his mind there is nothing but Poverty before him.” His clothes “declared poverty at every point.” He is finally in Poverty’s service and with Biffen wears her livery and eats her cuisine. Their intellectual life, however, can still exist, for Poverty cannot touch the core in dedicated students of the classics. In addition to transforming people’s feelings, Poverty can also destroy sanity. The impoverished surgeon who tells Alfred Yule he will go blind was once made insane by grief and poverty and “poverty will bring me to that again in the end” (p. 435). This surgeon “who has bungled himself into pauperdom” (p. 437) has been christened Victor, yet is ironically doomed to defeat (p. 438).

By running away from Poverty, Amy has destroyed her love for Reardon and her home. Her son and husband dead and her values corrupted, she is ready to join Jasper in the ironic happy ending. Poverty has changed her “to a woman I can’t recognise,” as Reardon had measured the extent of the deformation of her personality (p. 243). Amy has with Jasper escaped from Poverty,

-- 10 --

only she is now no longer herself. The action of “that accursed poverty” (p. 407) is not to be withstood, except by Jasper who is to this novel what the wily Odysseus, the survivor, is to the Homeric epic.

### III - The Protective Patrons : “Classic Ghosts”

The authors quoted throughout *New Grub Street* mean more than simply the reading experience and taste of the characters or of their creator, George Gissing. They are part of a narrative strategy to direct us to the genre of classical satire and especially to the Roman satire embodied paradigmatically in Juvenal’s *Satire* III with its subject of the degrading effects of poverty experienced in the metropolis. By entitling his work *New Grub Street* and specifically referring as early as page five to “Sam Johnson’s Grub Street” Gissing also alludes to the best known and the greatest English imitation of Juvenal’s third *Satire*, Johnson’s *London*. In a letter to Eduard Bertz, Gissing explains the relation of his title to Johnson’s use of the term.<sup>9</sup> The technique of his novel is moulded on “the strain of a modern man whose humour and sensibility find free play among the classic ghosts” (p. 164).

Since Gissing was having the same kind of difficulty in writing *New Grub Street* as Reardon was having in writing his novel, he conveyed this in the chapter called “Invita Minerva,” a phrase which comes from Horace’s *Ars Poetica*.<sup>10</sup> When Minerva is summoned to serve a writer with a block or a lack of talent, she will not come. But this is not the only chapter heading in which a classical authority is invoked. The second chapter is called “The House of Yule,” inevitably reminding the knowledgeable reader, as previously noted, of “The House of Atreus.”

Part of his difficulty in writing the book was that Gissing did not know on which one of his three heroes to concentrate. There was Alfred Yule, the satiric, bitter writer bred on the standards of the age of Johnson, the somewhat gifted but weak novelist, Reardon, and the man of his time,

-- 11 --

Jasper Milvain, the new Grub Street talent, writer of satirical pieces of ephemeral value. Gissing accordingly changed the title from “A Man of Letters” to “Victor Yule,” and finally to “*New Grub*

*Street*” which solved the problem, since then he could spend equal time on all three heroes, on their interrelationships and on their contrasted careers. Since they were all men of letters trying to earn a living in the London of their day, letters and literature would be in their blood as they were in Gissing’s. The setting of “the valley of the shadow of books,” the British Museum, would be where Milvain and Marian Yule meet, and the conversation of the main characters, including Marian and Amy, would be interlarded with mention of authors, their books and quotations from them.

But there would be a guiding principle in the selection of these authors. The twenty-eight or more mentioned are divided between classical authors and English authors who have a disposition to writing in Latin as well as in English or to using classical legends. Shakespeare, by virtue of his including the classical as well as the romantic and being above time or fashion, is quoted the most, seven times, and his poetry used both for the dying words of Reardon and the dying thoughts of Biffen. Homer comes a close second, sharing with Samuel Johnson five invocations. Sophocles, Euripides and Aristarchus (the last the editor of Homer) are mentioned twice each, and Dante and Balzac (whose *Le Cousin Pons* is concerned with poverty, and greed) are included to act as examples of the characters’ respect for continental literature in which the use of satire and irony is pronounced. The ending of *Le Cousin Pons* is ironic, and the *Divina Commedia* shows the embittered Dante devising ironical punishments for those in Hell. The only English authors mentioned who are not tied to a classical tradition are Dickens and Burns, but they are invoked chiefly because of their familiarity with poverty. Dickens was always in debt, and Burns, as Carlyle wrote, came from a family where “Poverty sunk the whole family even below our cheap school

-- 12 --

system.” He received little for his work and took out his bitterness in savage *Satires*. Carlyle, within the satirical tradition, also was poverty-ridden, but his presence in the book seems to depend on his relation to Jane Welsh Carlyle, his wife, who, from a higher social class, brought him some money and found life hard to bear, as Amy Reardon did. Every author mentioned, thus, has some relation to the classical tradition, to satire, or to the difficulties between upper-class women and their talented but poor husbands.

There are other authors who are referred to tangentially for reasons vital to the story. Milton is never mentioned by name but Alfred Yule is carefully built up around the figure of the blind English poet and Latin scholar. We infer this from the emphasis on Yule’s final blindness which takes place about three years after the first diagnosis, very much as Milton’s did. We learn after his death that he had died “in the country somewhere, blind and fallen on evil days” (p. 549), a quotation from Milton himself. The Milton connection is stressed from the picture of Yule’s character and temperament, from his reading and from his kind of invective and satirical raillery; he is called “a battered man of letters.” Although he is attached to the tradition of Johnson, his literary interests are centered in the writers of the seventeenth century. He talks of Dryden’s *Absalom and Achitophel*, for as a satirist he would be interested in seventeenth-century satire; he refers to Shadwell and Cottle, the bookseller (p. 36). He has a “pedantic individuality ceaselessly at conflict with unpropitious circumstances” (p. 37). There is another hidden reference to Milton when Yule has Marian, his daughter, write a paper on James Harrington’s *Oceana*, for he wants her to include a bit about Cyriac Skinner (p. 424). This name is probably invoked because of the two sonnets Milton wrote to Skinner, especially the one on his blindness.<sup>11</sup> After Victor Duke, the bungling surgeon, tells Alfred he will go blind, Yule tells Marian that she should send her Harrington article out, which is to remind us once more of Cyriac Skinner.

-- 13 --

Homer and Johnson are the chief “classic ghosts” of this novel and share the same number of frequencies of reference. Homer appears early on, when Jasper tells his sister that the “trade” of the writer has nothing to do with the literary giants “Homer, Dante and Shakespeare.” After that sounding and from that prime position in the list of giants, Homer will be the protective patron of the two noble, although failed, novelists of the book, Reardon and Biffen. The *Odyssey* will be read by Reardon to his wife Amy in memory of the times she shared his pleasure in reading the classics. He refers to the Nausicaa episode, the most romantic chapter in the *Odyssey* and she in turn remembers with delight that part of the poem when Odysseus goes to Hades and tries to explain to Ajax that his killing him was really the fault of Zeus. Ajax walks right past him without listening, for he cannot forgive (pp. 130-134). This passage will serve as a parallel to Amy’s unforgiving attitude to the poverty Reardon has subjected her to. When her son and husband both die within two days of each other from diphtheria and pneumonia, the inexorable destiny of the *Iliad* and Amy’s resemblance to Hecuba are also forced on the reader. When Jasper Milvain writes critical appreciations of Reardon and Biffen he is called by Whelpdale the “Aristarchus of literature,” Homer’s editor (p. 496). Sophocles, mentioned twice, is the author with whom Reardon and Biffen are at home and Biffen wants to scan *Oedipus Rex* (p. 496). Yule, in addition to resembling Milton in his equally irascible relations with his wife and daughter, is also like Oedipus. This similarity is indicated by means of the chapter heading, “The House of Yule,” with its imitation of “The House of Atreus.” It is, however, not to Agamemnon that Yule is linked but to Oedipus, who is also blind and is taken care of by his daughter when he has to leave Athens, as Yule has to leave London. As Jocasta ruined Oedipus’ life, so Mrs. Yule has ruined Alfred’s, both blamelessly. The classical spirit so moves Reardon and Biffen that when they are alone, especially after Reardon has parted from Amy and lives in the most acute poverty he has yet experienced, they speak as if they were indeed

-- 14 --

ancient academicians, using in their classical fantasy such expressions as “By all the gods of Olympus” (p. 399) and “By Apollo” (p. 400). Biffen, the poorest of them all, ironically swears “By Plutus,” the god of wealth!

In his *Dictionary* Johnson followed his definition of Grub Street (“much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems, whence any mean production is called grub street”) with a quotation from the Greek Anthology, IX, 458, translated as “Hail, Ithaca! After toil and bitter woe, I am glad to reach your soil.”<sup>12</sup> When Reardon lies dying and dreams he is in Greece, he sees Ithaca in the distance. It seems as if Gissing is remembering this quotation from the Greek Anthology as quoted by Johnson. The satiric tone deriving from Juvenal’s third *Satire* on Rome and from Johnson’s carrying on of that tradition is allotted to Jasper, who knows how to get along in Grub Street. He is the one who introduces Johnson by saying that Reardon behaves as if he lived in “Sam Johnson’s Grub Street,” whereas he, Jasper, is the man of the *new* Grub Street. Yule is also described as a man whose “literary ideals were formed on the study of Boswell.” The reader is meant to keep the Johnsonian strain in mind. Later Jasper again quotes Dr. Johnson: “Dr. Johnson’s saying, that ‘a man may write at any time if he will set himself doggedly to it,’ was often upon his lips, and had even been of help to him” (p. 322). By bringing the Johnsonian hard-headedness up to date, Jasper denies a passage from Buckle’s *History of Civilization* which is the longest extract in Gissing’s manuscript, *Extracts from my Reading*. The gist of the quotation is implicit in the opening sentence: “There is, in poetry, a divine and prophetic power and an insight into the turn and aspect of things, which if properly used would make it the ally of science, instead of the enemy.”<sup>13</sup> Alfred Yule wants to name a journal *Letters*, preferring that word to “literature.” For this he invokes



Johnson, by quoting his *Dictionary* meaning of literature – “learning, skill in letters’ – nothing

-- 15 --

else” (p. 425). However, Alfred Yule is connected with the satiric tradition of the seventeenth century rather than the eighteenth, and his comments on Dryden, Shadwell, Cottle and Milton tie him to that period in English letters. He is the master of the “diatribe” (p. 22) and Carlyle comes easily to his lips (p. 23).

Two English poets are introduced by name, one early and one late. The first is Tennyson who provides Marian with a quotation: “Delaying, as the tender ash delays | To clothe herself, when all the woods are green” (p. 26), which she places incorrectly in the *Idylls* (p. 26). The lines are actually from *The Princess* (IV, lines 106-107). Like *New Grub Street*, the poem, equipped with both a Prologue and a Conclusion, bears witness to Tennyson’s close study of the classics and his firm reputation as a Latin poet which he shares with Landor. Although the poem draws freely on the classical heroic style, it does not become a mock-heroic poem, a genre it flirts with and then repudiates. Introduced into *New Grub Street* it represents the changes that modern science have made in the writing of poetry, as well as the necessity for the education of women. This is embodied in Marian’s literary powers developed under her father’s tutelage. In the poem, a Tennyson scholar reports, there are “epic catalogues of female genius, formal epic addresses, Homeric turns of syntax, devices of Virgilian rhetoric.”<sup>14</sup>

The next to last author to be quoted in the novel is Walter Savage Landor who appears in the blissful chapter, or epilogue, where Jasper and Amy enjoy the happiness and security which is theirs for playing the game of *New Grub Street* correctly.<sup>15</sup> Jasper, now successful and wedded to the woman he loves, feels well disposed to everyone and comments, “What a true sentence that is of Landor’s: ‘It has been repeated often enough that vice leads to misery; will no man declare that misery leads to vice?’” (p. 551). Landor fits nicely into the *New Grub Street* category of the Latinists among the English poets. Not only is he, even more than Tennyson, the outstanding

-- 16 --

classical poet of the nineteenth century but his work abounds in the satiric and ironic, and in addition he fits into Gissing’s interests because his own marriage was not happy.

The other English poets are the seventeenth century Lord Herbert of Cherbury, whom Alfred Yule wants to write about, and three Romantic poets. Coleridge is the first who is brought into the narrative because he had “his Gillman,” a rich appreciative patron, otherwise he too would have starved (p. 214). The next is Keats whose most unromantic aspects are invoked in order to show that even he could not conceive of love without money. As Jasper tries to wriggle out of his engagement to Marian, he quotes from Keats’s most classical poem, *Lamia*, where his anti-romantic verses decry the effect of poverty on love. “Love in a hut, with water and a crust, | Is – Love forgive us! – cinders, ashes, dust” (p. 349). Chatterton, the last of the three, whose experience of London is mentioned by Reardon, is someone who offers nothing to a present-day writer. “We think of London as if it were still the one centre of intellectual life; we think and talk like Chatterton” (p. 468). What must be remembered about Chatterton, pertinent to the pattern in the novel, is that he wrote diatribes for London journals. Chatterton’s suicide will be a prefiguration of Biffen’s suicide, for Chatterton was under eighteen when he took arsenic, the victim of the same poverty. The reference to Chatterton occurs in the chapter just preceding that in which Reardon dies at Brighton, and as a climax to the Romantic tradition of the poet’s early death, stresses the doom of the sympathetic writers in Gissing’s novel.

Robert Burns is the last author summoned up as the book ends with the winning couple whom we could now call the anti-hero and heroine. The choice of Burns, one postulates, was dictated by a desire to get back (in spite of the change of financial luck for the survivors) to the major issue, Poverty. Burns was the poet of poverty – born in it, living in it, and writing about it with a strong satiric drive, without even the gilding of a classical education. On the next to the last page Jasper

-- 17 --

and Amy sit happily looking forward to continued success. Jasper says, “Happiness is the nurse of virtue” and Amy says, “And independence the root of happiness.” “True,” he answers, ““The glorious privilege of being independent’ – yes, Burns understood the matter”(p. 551). Because of the cruel poverty in which he was born and continued to live Burns fits into the library of *New Grub Street*, and following his invocation, Jasper says, “Go to the piano, dear, and play something” (p. 551), later adding, ““Better still if you will sing, my nightingale!” So Amy first played, and then sang, and Jasper lay back in dreamy bliss” (p. 552). Thus reads the final sentence of the novel. The close association of Robert Burns with Amy’s playing and singing inevitably leads the reader to wonder whether it was a Burns song she played and sang. The poverty-stricken Scottish poet who carried on the tradition of the ancient ballads would bring the satirical epic that is *New Grub Street* to an appropriately ironic conclusion.

Back of Gissing’s device of naming authors is the model of the Homeric catalogue and even more specific the Homeric retinue of gods and goddesses who champion their favorites and accompany them as a cheering squad in their battles and personal encounters. As heroes and protective gods give and take in a personal relationship, so Reardon and Homer, Biffen and Euripides (whose *Fragments* he wants to discuss), Jasper and Johnson, and Marian and Tennyson imply a give and take of values.

#### IV - The General Structure of the Novel

The structure of the novel, depending as it does on ancient classical authors and English authors who are either classically inspired or concerned with poverty, tends to have its main contours hewn in terms of the satiric irony found in those texts. Johnson wrote that in London “All Crimes are safe, but hated Poverty. | This, only this, the rigid law pursues. | This, only this, provokes the snarling Muse” (l.160).

-- 18 --

That particular muse being the muse of Satire, we find its influence also in the columns and supports of *New Grub Street*’s architecture. Johnson’s statement that “There is no being so poor and so contemptible, who does not think there is somebody still poorer, and still more contemptible,” is a kind of authority for the major subsidiary theme of “relative poverty” in Gissing’s novel, a phrase that is twice elaborated on with specific instances (pp. 38, 133). This concept establishes a hierarchy for the comparison of the three main families with Biffen, the lone writer totally wedded to poverty serving as an example of the extreme form of absolute poverty, as compared to the “relative poverty” of the others. Satire extends beyond the confines of the book, in which Jasper Milvain, whose aim was to write “a perfect piece of satire” (p. 76), and Alfred Yule are committed to it. We learn from a letter Gissing wrote on February 17, 1891 to his brother that he knew satire was the basis of *New Grub Street*: “I am astonished to find how well it reads. There are savage truths in it.”<sup>17</sup> “Savage truths” are indeed the product of satire. The word “satire” occurs at least three times

and its related terms, “diatribe” and “tirade” once each.

Chapter eight, in which Gissing writes like an eighteenth century satirist and in which Alfred Yule exchanges bitter remarks about the state of literature with his friends, is actually an imitation of Johnson and his circle. This scene balances the one between Biffen and Reardon which in turn imitates a meeting of classical authors (a scene Joyce was surely to notice later when he came to think of his own *Ulysses*). The “club” atmosphere of Yule’s circle is supported by satirical judgments which flow quickly in a series of epigrams reminiscent of Martial.<sup>18</sup> The chapter is ironically called “To the Winning Side,” but it is Jasper who will be drawn to it, not Alfred, who has lost the editorship of *The Study* and whose “literary ideals were formed on the study of Boswell” (p. 96).

These men are married to women without education from a lower social class. “They should

-- 19 --

have waited; they might have married a social equal at something between fifty and sixty” (p. 107). When, led by Alfred Yule, the master of the diatribe, the men criticized their fellow-writers, “Then did the room ring with scornful laughter, with boisterous satire, with shouted irony, with fierce invective” (p. 107).

In addition to the clever, framing devices of the prologue and the epilogue (a tradition Dryden had revived in his poetry), which keep the novel taut, Gissing seems to have planned the episodes of his *New Grub Street* according to the divisions advocated by the great seventeenth-century English classical writers. Dryden’s *Essay on Dramatick Poesie* summarised the four principal parts of a tragedy as prescribed by the ancients: protasis, epistasis, catastasis (the intensification of the first two parts), and finally, catastrophe. The last of the four is the only one to survive in the language. The first eight chapters of *New Grub Street* function as the protasis, the next eight as the epistasis. Chapters eighteen through twenty-eight comprise the catastasis, and the twenty-ninth chapter is even named “Catastrophe.” It is in that chapter that Alfred Yule learns of his blindness and his daughter Marian of the loss of her inheritance, two fatal blows to “the relatively poor (who, are so much worse off than the poor absolutely)” (p. 38). Amy’s mother had considered her daughter’s “descent” into poverty and her return to her prenuptial home as a “downright catastrophe” p. (253), but Gissing means that ironically, since the catastrophe is only a relative one. The disasters that beset Alfred and Marian mean *absolute* failure and result in *absolute* catastrophes for both father and daughter; the loss of his eyesight means the loss of his career and the loss of her money means the loss of her fiancé.

Beyond the classical divisions of his novel, Gissing has established a satirically inspired pattern for almost all the chapter headings, repeated on each page of the book to keep the point of view constantly before the reader. The first chapter is an ironical introduction to Jasper, for it is called “A Man of his Day,” which is both an accurate description of him and an ironical

-- 20 --

interpretation. By these words we are told what tack to take to him. If this is “the man of his day,” what can we think of “his day?” The second chapter, “The House of Yule” cues us to the classical innuendoes we are to expect. Chapter Four, “An Author and his Wife,” is a satirical description of how badly a man of letters and his wife live. “Marian’s Home,” Chapter Seven, is made up of two places, her day-time home in the British Museum, and her night-time home beset by the tragedy of a failed father married to a woman he considers the cause of his failure. Chapter Nine, “Invita Minerva,” directs us to Horace’s *Ars Poetica* and its implications of a writer’s block. The ironic

stress of the next few chapters is rather mild until we arrive at Chapter Twenty-Four, "Jasper's Magnanimity," an ironical naming of the cruel act of jilting Marian which exposes Jasper's ruthless self-interest.

After Chapter Twenty-Nine, "Catastrophe," and the disasters which hit the Yules, we encounter two bitterly ironical chapter headings. The first is Chapter Thirty-Two, "Reardon Becomes Practical," which shows how his practicality results in his death, and in Chapter Thirty-Six, "Jasper's Delicate Case," the jilting of Marian is presented to Amy in a completely false light. The last Chapter, Thirty-Seven, closes the novel in a great ironical flourish. Amy and Jasper convince themselves that Marian, if he had married her, would have ruined Jasper's life. "Poverty and struggle, under such circumstances, would have made me a detestable creature. As it is, I am not such a bad fellow, Amy" (p. 551). The reader knows he has evaded Poverty in a detestable fashion, for he has done so at the expense of others.

The ironical connotations and their classical and neoclassical overtones in these chapter headings, combine in an interesting synthesis with Gissing's esteem for Shakespeare. The Elizabethan's last play, *The Tempest*, provides exit lines for Reardon and Biffen, and it is consistent

-- 21 --

with Gissing's method that the one other Shakespearean quotation is from the classical *Antony and Cleopatra*, quoted when Reardon identifies with Antony. When forced by Poverty to sell his books, he keeps only his Homer and his Shakespeare. It might also occur to the reader (if he has followed carefully Gissing's method of arranging every part of his narrative in terms of literary references) to ask whether or not it is only a coincidence that the number of Chapters in *New Grub Street* should be the same as the number of plays written by Shakespeare.

#### Notes

All references to *New Grub Street* are from The Modern Library edition, New York, 1926. They are indicated by the page number. Although Samuel Vogt Gapp's well-known *George Gissing, Classicist* (1936) is not mentioned in the present article, it remains indispensable reading on the subject.

<sup>1</sup>Samuel Johnson, *The Complete English Poems*, ed. J. D. Fleeman, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971), p. 61.

<sup>2</sup>*Juvenal and Persius*, with an English translation by G. G. Ramsay (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard, 1950), p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>Gilbert Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (Princeton: University Press, 1962), pp. 13-14.

<sup>4</sup>*London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, ed. P. Coustillas (Lewisburg: Bucknell University, 1978), pp. 188-89. Future references indicated by D plus page number.

Gissing was reading both these Greek authors on December 10, 1889 while in Greece. "Have read Lucian's 'Dream' and 'Charon,' and half finished the 'Timon.' About half through Plato's 'Symposium.'"

-- 22 --

On Friday, December 13, he “finished Lucian’s ‘Timon’” (D 189) and on Sunday, December 15, he “finished the ‘Symposium’” (D 190). While completing *New Grub Street* in October, 1890, he reads Wieland’s translation of Lucian (D 229).

<sup>5</sup>*Lucian*, with an English translation by A. M. Harmon, volume II (London: Heinemann, 1929), p. 363.

<sup>6</sup>*Lucian*, volume II, p. 367.

<sup>7</sup>*The Letters of George Gissing to Eduard Bertz, 1887-1903*, (London: Constable, 1961), p. 122.

<sup>8</sup>Samuel Johnson, *The Complete English Poems*, p. 65 (London, line 161).

<sup>9</sup>*The Letters of George Gissing to Eduard Bertz, 1887-1903*, p. 122.

<sup>10</sup>It is a matter of course that Gissing knew it but it does seem too irrelevant (when we consider how Gissing read American periodicals) that in November, 1890, while Gissing was working on *New Grub Street*, he perhaps was reminded of it by a little poem called “Invita Minerva” which Oliver Wendell Holmes published in the *Atlantic Monthly*. His introduction includes these lines: “When one of the ancient poets found he was trying to grind out verses which came unwillingly, he said he was writing *Invita Minerva*”. The poem begins, “Vex not the Muse with idle prayers, | She will not hear thy call; | She steals upon thee unawares, | Or seeks thee not at all” (p. 305). Professor Eleanor Tilton, Professor Emeritus of Barnard College, Columbia University, called my attention to the existence of Holmes’ poem.

<sup>11</sup>The first one follows the Horatian pattern of admonition to the young, particularly Ode II, xi (“youth is fleeting”) and any student would know this. The second sonnet, “To Mr. Cyriac Skinner,” deals with his blindness:

-- 23 --

“Cyriac, this three years’ day these eyes, though clear, | To outward view, of blemish or of spot, | Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot”, etc.

<sup>12</sup>*A Johnson Reader*, ed. E. L. McAdam, Jr. and George Milne (New York: The Modern Library, 1966), p. 150.

<sup>13</sup>G. R. Gissing, *Extracts from My Reading*, (Ms., Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire), pp. 12-15.

<sup>14</sup>Jerome Buckley, *Tennyson: The Growth of a Poet* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1974), p. 98.

<sup>15</sup>It is interesting that Gissing himself was reading Landor, not only frequently in 1889 but on November 20, 1890. Five days before he finished *New Grub Street* he “Read some Landor” (D 331), just in time to use that author in his last pages.

<sup>16</sup>*Lamia*, part II, lines 1-2, p. 182 in *The Complete Poetical Works of John Keats*, ed. H. Buxton Forman (New York: Oxford, n.d.).

<sup>17</sup>*Letters of George Gissing to Members of His Family* (Boston : Houghton, Mifflin, 1927), p. 315.

<sup>18</sup>Gissing was reading Martial just after he received the proofs for his book. Martial appears also in *Extracts from My Reading*.

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### Review

George Gissing, *The Town Traveller*, ed. Pierre Coustillas, Brighton : The Harvester Press, 1981.

*The Town Traveller* was written in 1897 in just 35 days to make money – and it did: Gissing received a larger advance for it than for any of his previous books, and in less than a fortnight it sold 1400 copies in England and 1000 in the colonies. “Poor rubbish,” remarked the author,

-- 24 --

correcting the proofs; and later he told Bertz he was “disgusted” with the book. But Gissing’s appraisals of his own novels are notoriously erratic or unreliable. Within its limitations *The Town Traveller* is a highly accomplished piece of work. And – as Pierre Coustillas brings out in this new edition for Harvester – though speedily it was not carelessly written.

At first sight it seems a strange production for Gissing – almost suspiciously jovial and indulgent. Cheerfulness sounds out in the opening paragraph and is never cut short by bereavement or calamity. Lodged firmly in the comic mode as well as in their grimy and raucous dwellings, the characters are exempt from intensity of suffering. Indeed, an irrepressible vivacity abounds: with a Cockney cast of Gammons and Nibbys and Quodlings, farcical scenes of wrangling and courtship are enacted. Gissing, as contemporary reviewers noted, had been re-reading Dickens when he wrote *The Town Traveller*. Returning partially to the social terrain of his first novel, *Workers in the Dawn*, he returned also, as Coustillas says, to the influence of Dickens. One of the characters, Carrie Waghorn, even combines names that were prominent in the earlier book.

Dickens, of course, is often a weird mixture of the socially authentic and the frankly fantastic, of realism and melodrama. A similar discrepancy afflicts *The Town Traveller*, in which solid and perceptive social observation is hitched up to a highly improbable plot. With all its grainy, period detail – trams and omnibuses and music-halls, calendar adverts for sewing-machines, sooty tenements with iron steps, twisted forks in wooden-seated coffee-shops – the novel is, on one level, a wonderfully atmospheric sepia snapshot of lodging-house London in the nineties. The trouble begins when the picture starts to move. We are jerked into the intricacies of speeded-up intrigue. The Polperro-Clover-Greenacre story, with its bluffs and counterbluffs, assumed names and illegitimate half-brothers, secret assignations and dubious genealogies, spirals off into overplotted

-- 25 --

absurdity. The pungent actuality of the urban vulgar sits awkwardly with the confusions wrought

by the double life of a maverick peer who, we learn, has committed bigamy under a punning alias. Gissing, though, at least admits the absurdity: towards the end he has Gammon feel “as if he were acting in a melodrama,” while Greenacre says of Lord Polperro, “He jumped to the conclusion that – as they say on the stage – I knew everything”.

Gissing, then, lays safety-nets around his pasteboard plot. It remains true, all the same, that it is the social authenticity that keeps the book alive – and this is nowhere truer than in its treatment of jobs and speech. The London of *The Town Traveller* is a working city : the characters are placed repeatedly in the context of their jobs. Gammon, the eponymous bagman, can turn his hand to most kinds of commerce. Polly is a programme-seller who was once a “trotter” in a workroom; her father is the disaffected head-waiter at the now gimcrack Chaffey’s. Mrs. Bubb assumes the dignity that is proper to the widow of a police-officer. Greenacre – whose father is claimed to be a lawyer but was probably a coal-merchant – sells washing powder when not profiting from blackmail or begging letters. As in Dickens, characters are moulded by their occupations. But Gissing – and he treats the fact with both comedy and pathos – also puts his finger on the extent to which workers identify with their bosses. Christopher Parish, who makes two pounds a week at Swettenham’s, tea merchants, exults over the financial statistics of the firm; Gammon has a similar attitude when selling soap. Introduced to Gammon, Mr. Nibby says, “Glad to meet you, sir. I think it’s Berlin wools, isn’t it?” and Gammon replies, “You are the Gillingwater burners, I believe.” Most of the novel takes place in a world where work consumes identities as well as time. One sign of its lapse from realism towards the end is that Gammon’s quest for Lord Polperro entails several days off work.

Speech is also of great importance: traditional mispronunciations are recorded with relish (the

-- 26 --

characters eat “srimps” and call each other “obstropolous”), as is the fondness for more fashionable slang (“measly,” “pick-me-up,” “it fair mismerizes me”). Gissing takes great care that the speech stays in character: as Professor Coustillas shows in his study of the manuscript, he improved the English of Mrs. Clover to set her apart from the other female characters (just as, in chapter 27, he contrasts her neat handwriting with Polly’s scrawl). Greenacre uses educated, sometimes stilted language; Polperro, of higher birth, is more casually colloquial. Language is even crucial to the course of the plot; the abject Parish buys Polly’s affection with the money he makes from “the missing word” (“hygiene”). Greenacre steals a march on Gammon because he sees the link between “Clover” and “Trefoye”.

But the chief linguistic differentiation is that between the various characters and their author; in fact this is the novel’s main source of comedy. The rasping illiteracies of the characters are played off against the suavity of the narrator. It is odd that Gissing should have called the book “vulgar,” since he could hardly have gone further, through pervasive use of irony, to distance himself from its content. At times he seems to go too far, drawing intrusive attention to the verbal gulf with asides like, “a form of speech known to the grammarians by a name which would have astonished Mrs. Clover,” or “a phrase, by-the-bye, which would hardly have been understood in Mrs. Bubb’s household.” The irony can harden into sarcasm : Coustillas correctly notes the opening paragraph of chapter 25 as an instance. Elsewhere, Gissing uses a kind of Dickensian mock-heroic. The account of Polly and Parish’s first meeting, where Parish gives “conscientious evidence” to the tram inspector, and “declared, affirmed, and asseverated that the young lady was telling the truth,” recalls, say, Mr. Guppy’s proposal to Esther Summerson in *Bleak House* or the comically legalistic robbery arrangements in chapter 19 of *Oliver Twist*.

Through verbal sophistication Gissing holds his own creations at arm’s length. In a similar

fashion, he drops a little cold irony on Mr. Gammon's warm sozzled mirthfulness: "Life abounds in such forms of happiness, yet we are told that it is a sad and sorry affair!" The characters are frequently hilarious, but the author, though good-humoured, is merely amused. But where Gissing is most anxious to separate himself from the characters is in the notation of class. There are at least eight explicit references to class-based behaviour in *The Town Traveller*, as well as numerous implicit allusions. An anthropologist of vulgarity, Gissing records the customs of his chosen specimens with documentary exactness. But his well-known preferences still seep through. Greenacre's weakness for the aristocracy is his saving grace. Lord Polperro, reacting against the class in which he was born, marries an Irish peasant girl and reads books on gipsies. Enthusiastically slumming on New Year's Eve ("Let's go into the crowd, Gammon. I like a crowd!"), he gets caught up in a bestial brawl and expires, appropriately, having been trampled by the rampant *hoi polloi*.

There is a good deal of Gissing himself in *The Town Traveller*, then, as well as a good deal of his literary skill. Both points are brought out by Pierre Coustillas in this excellent new edition. Carefully charting the history of the book's composition, he reveals the thorough preparation that went into it: not only the excursions to Kennington and Dulwich, but the comments and clippings in Gissing's "scrap-book," a document now in the Carl H. Pforzheimer Library. This scrap-book is the source, Coustillas shows, of the passages on dogs, fishing, hygiene and the habits of commercial travellers, as well as on the "Missing Word" competition, a newspaper craze of the 1890s. (It's the scrap-book, too, incidentally, that demonstrates the thoroughness of Gissing's research on occupations and speech: one manuscript is headed "Slang (Journalistic and Advertising English – London Vulgarisms and Superstitions)"; a huge dossier on "Occupations" lists fifteen books that

give information on employment). Through a collation of the manuscript with the two first editions (English and American) Coustillas further illustrates Gissing's professionalism and conscientious artistry.

He also emphasises how many of Gissing's deepest preoccupations enter into *The Town Traveller*. Despite its obvious differences from the earlier novels, this book is by no means uncharacteristic. A thousand small brush strokes establish the author's signature. In larger areas, too, like the presentation of women, Gissing's hand is firmly discernible. The heroine, Polly Sparkes, has female relatives dispersed all over Gissing's fiction of the nineties. Her response to masculine force when Gammon manhandles her – furious at the time but yielding impressed later – relates, as Middleton Murry notes, to much else in Gissing's treatment of sexual relations. Gissing had closely scrutinised his second wife, Edith. In his scrap-book he records how she expressed her delight in an actor called Gurney: "He always took a villain's part, and *used to thrash women*. I'd have gone anywhere to see him." But Edith, of course, was rowdy and shrewish herself, never more so than in 1897, when Gissing eventually fled from her. Women in *The Town Traveller* are depicted accordingly. The book opens with Gammon's hearty accents being sharply succeeded by the voice of Polly – "A voice very distinctly feminine," we are told, "rather shrill and a trifle imperative." At the end, the squalid demise of Polperro is hastened along by the gentler sex: one girl squirts liquid into his ear, another knocks his hat off; a drunken woman strikes the first violent blow. By contrast Mrs. Clover, among "the nobler of her sex," is a wistful approximation to Gissing's ideal – discreet, self-controlled and quietly domestic. I cannot agree with Professor Coustillas when he writes: "Mrs. Clover, we fear, will put the screw on the ebullient traveller. When we leave him he has already



decided to sell his bow-wows, and the last chapter shows him 'at rest,' a premonitory sign of his submission." But the title of the last chapter "The Traveller at Rest," is a word-play on a well-

-- 29 --

known English pub-sign, connoting relaxation and hospitable refuge. Mrs. Clover smiles at Gammon "so gently, so modestly" : with her homely neatness and "merry little laugh," her "gleaming china shop" and "little parlour," she emerges as a distinctly Dickensian figurine – partly reminiscent, in fact, of Ruth Pinch, about whom Gissing wrote so yearningly soon after completing this book. Mrs. Clover, I think, represents serenity rather than repression.

When all reservations have been stated, however, this remains a fine edition of a fascinating book. As Professor Coustillas puts it at the end of his introduction, *The Town Traveller* "is a solid sociological document as well as a thoroughly entertaining period piece." – David Grylls

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#### Notes and News

The latest issue in the Victorian Fiction Research Guides published by the University of Queensland is an index to fiction in *Tinsleys' Magazine*, afterwards known as the *Novel Review* (1867-1892). It duly records the publication of Gissing's story "The Artist's Child" in 1878 and of the article on Gissing by Morley Roberts in 1892. It should be noted that an article on Roberts himself appeared in the *Novel Review* just before its demise.

Gissing scholars who are interested in Conrad may like to know that Vol. 1 of Conrad's works in French translation has just been published by Gallimard in the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. The general editor, Sylvère Monod, makes a passing mention of Gissing in his introduction.

Mrs. Ernesta Spencer-Mills reports that the art journal *Brutium*, now in its sixty-first year, published an article on new town-planning in Catanzaro, Calabria. The writer, Professor Emilia Zinzi, asked the authorities: "What will happen to the Pharmacy Ex-Leone? It will remain maybe the only image left to us in the nineteenth century by George Gissing, a sensitive Englishman of

-- 30 --

culture, to whom it appeared an ambience of exceptional taste and artistic value in this city which overlooks the Ionian Sea" (January/March 1982).

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#### Recent Publications

##### Volumes

Although no new edition or study of Gissing's works has been received in the last few weeks, a number of volumes seem to have appeared in recent months or years which are worth mentioning. *The Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature* for 1978 (published in 1981) reports the publication of a translation into Rumanian of *New Grub Street* with a forty-page introduction by Ileana Verzea (Bucharest : Minerva). *Books in Print 1981-82* lists a number of reprints by R. West :

*A Life's Morning*, *The Odd Women*, *Henry Ryecroft*, *The Town Traveller* and *Short Stories of To-day and Yesterday* (all at prices ranging from \$25 to \$30). *The Town Traveller* would also seem to have been reprinted in 1980 by Century Bookbindery and in 1981 by Telegraph Books at \$25 and \$20 respectively. None of these reprints is to be found in the Catalogue of the Library of Congress. Also according to *Books in Print 1981-82*, *The House of Cobwebs* was reprinted by Telegraph Books in 1980. Since the Catalogue of the Library of Congress for recent months reports the acquisition of reprints of *Reviews of George Gissing* by Desmond MacCarthy and of Ruth Capers McKay's well-known critical study, it must be assumed that these two small volumes are actually available from R. West.

A new Italian translation of *By the Ionian Sea*, entitled *Lungo il mar Jonio*, is listed in the Italian equivalent of *Books in Print* for 1981. The book was published in 1980 by Parallelo 38, a Reggio firm.

A New York correspondent reports that Dover, who published a new edition of *Eve's Ransom* last year, have brought out *In the Year of Jubilee* in paperback at \$6. 00. This edition will be reviewed in due course.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Marylin B. Saveson, "George Gissing: Critical Essays," *The Cresset*, December 1981, pp. 30-31. Review of the anthology compiled by J.-P. Michaux.

Richard Lehan, "Recent Books: British Fiction," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, December 1981, p. 380. Review of the same anthology.

P. J. M. Robertson, *The Leavises on Fiction: An Historic Partnership*, Macmillan, 1981. Gissing appears on pp. 25-26.

Claude Jolicoeur, "L'Ecrivain, grand-prêtre de la littérature, ou *New Grub Street* allégorie de l'âme de l'artiste," *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens*, no. 15, April 1982, pp. 71-78.

Alice B. Markow, "George Gissing: Advocate or Provocateur of the Women's Movement," *English Literature in Transition*, 1982, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 58-73.

Asa Briggs, *Cities and Countrysides: British and American Experience 1860-1914* (The H. J. Dyos Memorial Lecture, 12 May 1981). Victorian Studies Centre, University of Leicester, 1982. Gissing and Ryecroft appear on p. 19.

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