

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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-- 1 --

Good News for Gissing:
A New Collected Edition Announced

Pierre Coustillas

In a rather pessimistic article entitled “Paperback Reprints: The Anatomy of Literary Survival” (*Times Literary Supplement*, 27 September 1985, p. 1067) Nigel Cross made of Gissing a striking exception in the world of once neglected authors who are coming into their own. “The most dramatic instance of a rescued author,” he wrote, “is George Gissing;” whereupon he tried to explain why. “Since the 1970s Gissing’s novels with their ... emphasis on sex, class and money, seen from the point of view of those deprived of all three, have had a

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-- 2 --

sustained printing history.” The latest development in this continuing history comes from a comparatively new direction. The Hogarth Press, which reprinted *The Whirlpool* in March 1984, has announced a project of which Gissing’s admirers have dreamt for years – a collected paperback edition of the novels.

Gissing himself, encouraged by his friends the Henry Normans, had hoped for a collected edition of his works and, but for A. H. Bullen’s unreasonable demands when negotiations with various publishers took a very concrete turn, his hope might have materialized with Methuen or Heinemann. But, besides being handicapped by living in France, he was not pushing enough, and his agent J. B. Pinker, though prepared to do his best for him, did not have an altogether free hand to carry the plans through. The idea was revived between the wars, at a time when a

good many of Gissing's stories were reprinted in popular editions. Then a new obstacle arose. The writer's brother and literary executor, the failed novelist Algernon Gissing, made endless objections, systematically hampering Pinker's brave efforts with Dutton, a firm whose director was keen on the idea of a collected edition.

Readers of the present generation need not be told from what publishing house hope came next. Nineteen titles, half of which were reprinted in paperback, have been published in England by the Harvester Press in the last fifteen years, and there is no reason to believe that the series will not be completed. A twentieth title is to appear in 1986. Still some readers have observed that this collected edition, despite its unquestionable scholarly merits, is not satisfactory in all respects – the volumes are not uniform.

The new venture by the Hogarth Press has obviously different aims, and it has made an excellent start. This is not a critical edition in the sense given to the phrase by such publishers as Norton or Oxford University Press in so far as their editions of *Bleak House* or *Tess of the*

-- 3 --

d'Urbervilles are concerned. Nor is it a critical edition in the sense used by the Harvester Press, that is reissues of the novels with an introduction, a bibliographical note on the history of the book, textual notes, a bibliography and, in a number of cases, a detailed study of the manuscript. What the Hogarth Press offers is rather a mass-market paperback edition, uniform and most attractively produced. All volumes will contain an identical biographical introduction of four pages followed by a short critical assessment of about the same length. No notes and bibliographies are given; they belong to another genre.

Three titles were published simultaneously on 5 December, *The Emancipated*, *Born in Exile*, and *Will Warburton*, while a reissue of the 1984 edition of *The Whirlpool* with a new cover has also been made available. The critical commentaries are by either Gillian Tindall or John Halperin and the texts have been reproduced from the earliest suitable editions – *The Emancipated* from the revised edition published by Lawrence & Bullen in 1893, *Born in Exile* from the first one-volume edition published by A. & C. Black also in 1893, and the two other titles from the first English editions respectively dated 1905 and 1897. This is a good selection to start with as it takes into consideration several factors such as availability from other publishers at comparable prices, and acknowledged place in the Gissing hierarchy of values. *The Emancipated* and *Will Warburton* especially should find plenty of new readers.

A new batch of volumes is to appear in 1986. It will include *Denzil Quarrier* and *In the Year of Jubilee*, probably also *The Paying Guest*, and with this title a double question arises which the Hogarth Press will have to solve with some measure of arbitrariness. As it seems out of the question to photograph the first edition, which, in the uniform edition, would have either abnormally big type or abnormally wide margins, the text will probably have to be reset. But then the book will look too short and it will have to be issued with another title between the

-- 4 --

same covers. The most suitable one would doubtless be *The Town Traveller*, if another "light" story is indeed the best companion. At some later stage the same problem will occur with *Sleeping Fires* which, in the Hogarth format, will hardly do on its own. Its natural companion, for chronological and other reasons, would seem to be *Eve's Ransom*, which was originally printed in very large type in America and might also have to be reset. Fortunately no such technical difficulties will arise with the novels of the 1880s, with the exception of *Isabel Clarendon*, to which Gissing did a disservice when he declined Bullen's offer to bring out a one-volume edition in 1896.

While looking forward to the new editions of these various titles in a new format we can

rejoice in the possession of the first batch of three and in the prospect of the reissue of *The Whirlpool* in its present garb together with the frontispiece to be found in the other books – a photograph of Gissing taken by Russell on 16 January 1895 which first appeared in the *Album* on 25 February of the same year. The general reader will find in the editorial material the kind of information he needs if he is to view Gissing and his artistic achievement objectively. The biographical abstract aptly combines fact and opinion. “Writers’ lives are rarely as interesting as their books. The life of George Gissing is an exception.” Thus begins the evocation of a career of which both Gillian Tindall and John Halperin have written at length in their predominantly biographical studies of the novelist. The concluding paragraph does full justice to his originality:

Gissing gives us a unique view of Victorian society, but his are the concerns of almost every generation. Perhaps the most class-conscious of the English novelists – a class-obsessed breed – in his books Gissing examines again and again the complicated connections between money, marriage and social

-- 5 --

status. More sensitively than any other English novelist and more consistently than any other, he skillfully shows the effects on individuals of poverty and class prejudice, and how these things affect and even shape the relation of the sexes. Many of his novels focus on the question of what happens when a man or woman marries exogamously – that is, beyond the confines of his or her natural class – just as he had done himself. Like Dickens, and for something of the same reasons, Gissing saw himself as an outsider from what should have been his proper social milieu – as a man in exile.

Only the specialist reader will be apt occasionally to raise an eyebrow on reading that *By the Ionian Sea* was published in 1900 (the serial was, but it is not the date of the publication in book form that is chosen elsewhere, except for *Henry Ryecroft* which is said to have appeared in 1902) and *The Paying Guest* in 1896 (again this is quite correct, but the title page of the first edition nevertheless reads 1895). Similarly, whether Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port, or rather Ispoure, where Gissing died, is “near St. Jean de Luz” is a matter of opinion. The French view of the matter would be rather negative. But these things hardly matter. It is more appropriate to acknowledge the solid critical assessments offered by the editors. One is glad to read Gillian Tindall’s opinion that *Born in Exile* is, “by any reckoning, an important and significant work.” The recent essay by Charles Swann in *Literature and History* took the same view after a number of distinguished commentators. The blurb also strikes the right note: “Published in 1892, four years before Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure*, *Born in Exile* is one of the most powerful of Victorian novels – all the more vivid and ironic because Gissing had often regarded himself as a ‘natural aristocrat.’ But Victorian man though he may be, Godwin Peak, with his moral doubts and emotional uncertainties, also prefigures the social estrangement we associate more with the

-- 6 --

twentieth century: here is the ambition, the rage and resignation of an individual trying to come to terms with his age.”

John Halperin is equally appreciative of the literary standard of the new titles he introduces. His thematic exploration of *The Emancipated* as a novel which “elucidates the moral and educational process that must take place in the puritan psyche before it can be reconciled to

the respectability of art” places the book in the tradition of the English novel wholly or partly set in Italy, a subject on which Kenneth Churchill threw some light in his book on *Italy and English Literature 1764-1930*. Halperin is even more enthusiastic about *Will Warburton*, Gissing’s last completed novel, to which Colin Partridge also gave good marks recently. “It is one of his greatest books,” writes Halperin, “another in the long line of neglected masterpieces he gave to a largely indifferent posterity.” Certainly Gissing’s new readers as well as some of the old ones need be told that “he was well before Galsworthy, Forster and Lawrence in noting the vulgarity of advertising, the mind-numbing noise of urban machinery, and the spoliation by commercial interests of quiet suburbs and rural landscapes.” Orwell saw this clearly and said so in his two essays on Gissing at a time when interest in such a masterpiece as *New Grub Street* was at its lowest.

While the Hogarth Press is doing its best to enlarge Gissing’s audience in England and on the Continent, where copies of Gillian Tindall’s edition of *The Whirlpool* could be seen in many bookshops over a year ago, tangible evidence is being given that Gissing’s books are soon to find new readers in several Continental countries. A moderately priced German translation of *New Grub Street* is very soon to appear in the Munich-based “Die andere Bibliothek” (see “Notes and News”), and the Romanian firm Minerva, which issued the same title in 1978, is now to publish *Thyrza*, translated by Bianca Zamfirescu. An Italian translation of *The Odd Women* is currently in the hands of a potential publisher.

-- 7 --

More exotic and equally exciting is the news relayed by Professor Shigeru Koike that several Japanese translations are to appear in the present year: the titles will include *Born in Exile* and *The Odd Women*. The importance of this new development will be manifest to anyone aware that, great though Gissing’s popularity was for several decades in Japan, it was essentially based on *Henry Rycroft* and the short stories. The only novel translated into Japanese in the last twenty years was *New Grub Street*.

Although some poorly informed critics have represented Gissing as in no way interested in the literature of his time, with the exception of a few major figures such as Meredith and Hardy, it is now clearly established that he spent much of his leisure reading contemporary works of fiction by authors whom he thought he could not ignore because he frequently came upon their names in newspapers and literary journals. A scholar might indeed profitably enquire into the subject and publish an annotated list of all the books which Gissing is known to have read. It would prove of great value to any student of the novelist’s culture and would doubtless supply clues to hitherto unsuspected influences.

One of his most distinguished contemporaries that he read comparatively late in his career, “Mark Rutherford,” is currently being reprinted in very much the same way as himself by the Hogarth Press. The connection between Gissing and “Mark Rutherford” may first have been realised by Gissing himself. Two entries in his diary show that he read *Clara Hopgood*, “Mark Rutherford’s” last novel (1896), very shortly after its publication (entry for 8 May), then *The*

-- 8 --

Revolution in Tanner’s Lane (14 June). Gissing’s letters of late spring and early summer of that year 1896 have nothing to tell us about his appreciation of these two books, a by no means exceptional case especially in the last ten years of his life, when he was less and less inclined to

pass criticism on contemporary literature. Only books that he thought very good or very bad elicited some remark from him. Thus Arthur Morrison's *A Child of the Jago*, read in the same year as the two "Rutherford" titles was dismissed summarily: "Poor stuff" (25 December), whereas Mrs. Oliphant's *Miss Marjoribanks* was pronounced excellent (27 September). But of William Hale White, alias "Mark Rutherford," a man old enough to have been his father, not a word. Clearly the two men never met, but they may have heard of each other through two acquaintances with a reputation as conversationalists, William Robertson Nicoll, editor of the *Bookman* and the *British Weekly*, whose accounts of the two writers can be found in *A Bookman's Letters* (1913), and Justin McCarthy, the politician and historian, who wrote a preface to a book by White's father and was one of Gissing's correspondents. "Mark Rutherford" and Gissing were also united in the artistic consciousness of some writers, notably Stephen Crane, Joseph Conrad, Edmund Gosse, Arnold Bennett, D. H. Lawrence and – though this is hardly known to Gissing scholars – André Gide. Lastly and more importantly the two writers have, since the First World War, been associated in the minds of a number of literary critics and historians of literature, notably Ernest A. Baker and R. C. Churchill. Claire Tomalin, who has contributed an introduction to *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane* (1887) and afterwards to *Catharine Furze* (1893) and *Clara Hopgood* (1896), is no exception.

William Hale White was a native of Bedford, the son of a dissenting printer and bookseller, and he studied at a dissenting theological college which he had to leave on account of so-called heretical views. He became a civil servant in Somerset House and later held a post as assistant

-- 9 --

director of contracts in the Admiralty, but before that, on his being expelled from New College for his unorthodox opinions, he worked for a time as proof-editor on the radical *Westminster Review* in the days of Marian Evans' editorial partnership with John Chapman. Unlike Gissing, he turned to novel-writing in middle age. *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford* (1881) and *Mark Rutherford's Deliverance* (1885), which were reprinted by Leicester University Press some fifteen or twenty years ago, are not yet available from the Hogarth Press, but the promised new edition is worth looking forward to. The *Autobiography* relates White's own loss of faith against a background of London life at its lower levels, but the book is also fraught with an anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois atmosphere which is at its most aggressive in *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*. In this book, the provincial ambience of Cowfold bears some resemblance to that in Gissing's early story "All for Love" or in the more mature *Denzil Quarrier*. Thomas Broad, the foolish young clergyman who seeks Pauline Caillaud's favour, is not unlike the younger Whiffle in *Workers in the Dawn*. White's concern with the relationship between men and women and his plea for broad-mindedness and liberty must have roused Gissing's sympathy as did Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm*, another feminist novel of the same years, "a very moving book, the product of a mind with which I strongly sympathize" (Diary, 16 April 1889).

William Hale White was a man with a more placid temperament than Gissing, but they shared a preoccupation with their own guilty secret as well as experiences of poverty in London. The two volumes of autobiography have distinct affinities with such stories as *Born in Exile* and Mrs. Humphry Ward's *Robert Elsmere* and with books which Gissing did not read or did not live to read, like *The Way of all Flesh* and *Father and Son*. Their most obvious common denominator is their authors' sharp criticism of religious oppression. Pauline Caillaud and her

-- 10 --

daughter in *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane* are types of agnostic, if not atheistic, women like Marcella Moxey in *Born in Exile*, and they can hardly fail to appeal to the liberated women of

the present day.

The two other “Mark Rutherford” titles published in 1985 by the Hogarth Press are *Catharine Furze*, which early reviewers had to consider at about the same time as Gissing’s openly feminist novel *The Odd Women*, and *Clara Hopgood*. They both testify to White’s capacity to write sympathetically about women, freedom and equality, and with a boldness which caused Ernest A. Baker to remark that White subscribed to Henry Ryecroft’s belief in outspokenness: “An honest and wise man should have a rough tongue. Let him speak and spare not!” (Summer XIII). Catharine herself, in the earlier novel, is candid with a vengeance. Her intelligence is not to be hoodwinked by the pretences and hypocritical attitudes which are all-too-common in middle-class life. The daughter of an ironmonger prodded and pushed up the social ladder by a snobbish wife, she struggles to be free of the lies and injustices their social ambition entails. Her fate becomes tangled with those of a young apprentice, Tom Catchpole, and a married preacher, the Reverend Cardew. The pessimistic ending is of a piece with the novelist’s philosophy, which the publishers’ description of the book aptly reflects: “It is a love story, but one with a difference, linking the rebellious turmoil of adolescent sexuality to an enduring hunger for personal and social liberty”.

Catharine Furze is of White’s six novels that which is closest to the traditional form. It shows a narrative urge which is not to be found in the two volumes of semi-fictional autobiography because in these no real plot is to be found. *Clara Hopgood* utilizes very much the same themes. Clara and her sister Madge live with their widowed mother in a quiet East Midland village in the Hungry Forties. They are spiritually emancipated and express political opinions which are thought to be subversive and doubtless harmonize with the revolutionary

-- 11 --

ethos that prevailed in Europe prior to the political outbreak of 1848. Madge becomes one of those women whom Gissing once called “unlicensed mothers” and she courageously refuses to marry her seducer after realizing how mediocre he is. In this *Clara Hopgood* naturally links up with such better-known stories as Wilkie Collins’s *The New Magdalen*, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* and *Esther Waters*. But Madge Hopgood is ultimately saved by a character who reminds us of the biographical connection between White and George Eliot, namely Baruch, a Clerkenwell diamond-cutter with a definite likeness to the Jewish characters in *Daniel Deronda*. He magnanimously marries Madge with her child thus giving one more radical touch to a novel noted for its denunciation of the hypocrisy surrounding illegitimacy and, like the other “Mark Rutherford” titles, for its congenial picture of courageous women living on their own.

The three volumes so far reprinted by the Hogarth Press are uniform with the Gissing volumes and published at the same price, £3.95, save the shorter *Catharine Furze* which, because it has been reset, looks much smaller and is priced at £3.50. When the complete works of the two authors have been reissued – a near enough prospect for White with his six novels – there will be many appreciative readers to think that the Hogarth Press has done the two novelists a signal service.

Speech and Character:
Dialect in the Novels of George Gissing

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Dialect is used extensively by Gissing in his novels and can be seen to play an important

role in characterization. In the early novels, where he is more interested in social conflict than in the individual, dialect is used only to identify working-class characters. However, in later novels, as his characters become psychologically more complex, so his use of dialect changes. The aim of this paper will be to examine the function of dialect in three of his novels (*Workers in the Dawn*, *The Nether World* and *The Town-Traveller*),¹ and to trace the evolution of its use in verbal characterization. The variety depicted in these novels is Cockney and, rather than concentrating on Gissing's technical representation of its phonology, syntax and vocabulary, this study will be concerned with examining which characters use it, to whom and in what context.

In *Workers in the Dawn*, Gissing gives dramatic life to the relationships in a working-class community. The novel tells, among other things, the story of a working-class girl, Carrie Mitchell, who struggles to leave a life of prostitution and drunkenness behind her. Her aunt, Mrs. Pettindund, and two other London landladies, Mrs. Pole and Mrs. Hemp, try to impede her process of self-improvement, standing in her way because Carrie, unlike them, attempts to live differently in a community in which roles are firmly established. They also distrust her because she uses a different linguistic code:² her use of dialect is not so marked as theirs. Their relationship with her is marked, then, by strong behavioural attitudes – violence, lack of respect – which are shown by characteristic speech-events such as quarrelling or abuse. Despite the help

-- 13 --

given to her by her future husband, Arthur Golding, she in turn comes into conflict with him because of his excessive demands on her. His attempts to change her behaviour and her speech habits end in failure because of the inevitable communication gap between two people with different educational and social backgrounds: she is working-class and he belongs to the middle classes.

Although Carrie Mitchell is supposed to be a poorly educated working-class girl, at the beginning of the novel Gissing does not reproduce directly either dialectal speech or her spelling mistakes. Indeed he hints at the fact that she is a non-standard speaker not so much through her dialogues but in Golding's remarks to and about her, and shows her lack of education in a letter she sends to Arthur Golding, thanking him for paying her lodging rent: "Please excuse my writing. I never had enough schooling to learn to spell properly" (II, p. 286). The author later says that "the orthographical errors were so abundant" that he had "chosen to correct the latter fault, lest the letter should excite amusement." Equally significantly, in the early dialogues of the novel, her speech is hardly marked for dialect, except for a few non-standardisms such as the pleonastic negative or the use of the correlative *as* instead of the relative *that*. An author who had pledged himself to "bring home to people the ghastly condition (material, mental and moral) of our poor classes"³ would not be put off by the comic effect that the inclusion of some spelling mistakes and the presence of a few non-standardisms might produce; indeed, the speech of other characters is clearly marked for dialect. The reason for the apparent contradiction in the case of Carrie Mitchell is that Gissing was strongly biased in favour of educated English and, in his work, standard English is often equated with moral worth.⁴ Carrie Mitchell's worthiness is consequently increased by her appearing to be a speaker of a socially acceptable variety at the beginning of the novel. In the same way, the use of dialect in the verbal profile of characters such as Mrs. Pettindund, Mrs. Pole or Mrs. Hemp serves to

-- 14 --

emphasize their lack of moral worth. Thus, Gissing deliberately seeks to distinguish Carrie from these characters not only linguistically but also morally:

Carrie's experience had been that of the numberless girls in a similar destitute condition whom London nightly pillows in her hard corners, the only peculiarity being that she had found a way out of her misery without having recourse either to the workhouse or the river. (III, p. 68)

The relationship between language and behaviour so often seen in Gissing's work is exemplified by Mrs. Pettindund. She is a drunken, low-minded person whose speech is emblematic of her coarse behaviour. When Carrie pleads with her to let her stay until her child is born, Mrs. Pettindund rejects Carrie's plea in "her coarse, gin-thickened, over-fed voice and always with that inimitable ferocity of the true London lodging-house keeper" (II, p. 276). The dialogue between the two women is worth quoting because in it dialect is associated with intransigence and brutality, while standard English is related to softness and pleading:

"Yer don't think I'm sich a fool as to keep yer, eh?" pursued the kindly-hearted landlady. "An' lose the good name o' th' 'ouse an' all? If you do, you're mistaken, that's all as I've got to say t'yer"...

"You won't turn me out of doors, aunt?" pleaded the girl's sobbing voice. "Won't you let me stay till it's over, and then work and pay you all back?"

"A likely joke that, too! *You* pay me back! Catch yer doin' of it! I tell you, you leave this 'ouse to-day, an' there's no two ways about that. D'ye 'ear?" (II, p. 275)

The distance between the two speakers is also revealed in the use of kinship vocabulary. While Carrie employs the emotive term *aunt* in the conversation, Mrs. Pettindund consistently

-- 15 --

refers to her as *you*, showing no signs of group solidarity. The contrast between the two women is even more marked when Carrie returns after the birth of her child. Mrs. Pettindund, drunk and in a fierce temper, uses rich dialectical speech – more accentuated on account of her heavy drinking – which contrasts strikingly with Carrie's more formal language (II, pp. 300-01). Thus, Gissing skilfully exploits the verbal dramatization of antagonistic attitudes in social behaviour.

Mrs. Pole and Mrs. Hemp exert a strong influence on Carrie's speech and behaviour. Indeed, the number of non-standardisms grows in her expression as the contact with the two women becomes closer (III, p. 73). Despite her efforts to keep away from the public houses, she gives in; she leaves Arthur Golding, seeking the company of these two women. Golding receives a message "written in Carrie's well known scrawl and with all her favourite errors of spelling" (III, p. 80), showing that Golding's teaching has been in vain and that Carrie's self-improvement was doomed to failure: she goes back to the social group to which she belongs. Accordingly, she adopts the behaviour and speech habits of that group. With Mrs. Pole, for instance, she quarrels in a public house, their "shrill voices" attracting a little crowd. In the ensuing fight, Gissing describes Mrs. Pole as having "the violence of a fury, and the language of a Billingsgate fish-wife," while Carrie "was hatless, her hair streaming in wildest disorder, her dress torn in places, her face swollen and tear stained" (III, p. 30).

Mrs. Hemp is an "evil-looking personage" among whose "endless passions, avarice was that which she most carefully nursed" (III, p. 210). The central topic of her conversation is money and so her speech reflects her obsession in a wide variety of words and images related to it: *tin*, *blessed farthing*, *flush of coin*, *bundle o' sovrings*, *sight of tin*, *heap o' tin*, *that tin*, or *bloomin' sight of tin*. Mrs. Hemp tries to convince Carrie of the validity of her claims on

Golding's money, and both women go so far as to plot his death. Carrie here reaches her lowest point morally, and her degradation is reinforced by her speech, which includes more dialectal features than ever before.

"Do you know what that means, eh, Polly?" asked Carrie, her face distorted in a grin of foolish glee.

"No fear," returned the other. "'Tain't the first time as I've seen that kind o' thing. My God! What a heap o' tin! And he don't know as you're up to this, eh?"

"Trust him," said Carrie, winking. "And he's got more than this. He has a bank-book, too. I see it wunst, but I don't know where it is now. Ain't I in for a good spree some day?" (III, p. 387)

Golding adopts from the very first a patronising attitude towards Carrie that sometimes appears excessive. For instance, when Carrie has to leave Mrs. Pettindund's house, Golding sees her as a defenceless girl, exposed to all kinds of social evils. This feeling is reinforced by the fact that she will not be able to "get on in the world" because she cannot speak a prestige variety of English like Golding's. For him, the fact that Carrie speaks non-standard English is a clear indication of her inability to cope with the problems of life (II, p. 287). He aims to teach her, realizing the importance of language as a means of gaining acceptance in higher social circles:

"Then by chance I got a place as a shop-boy under a most excellent master, a man whom I have to thank for nearly all the knowledge I possess, without whom I might still have been a mere ignorant, rude-speaking workman." (III, p. 54)

But they both have clearly different social values. Golding sees education as fundamental

to an improvement of his social status. Education is also accompanied by a certain elegance of speech, clearly removed from the linguistic habits of the "rude speaking workman." And, for him, this is the key to acceptance and success in society. For her own part, Carrie is not much concerned about the mechanisms of social mobility. When Arthur Golding tells her of his intentions to educate her, Carrie's reaction is one of astonishment and apprehension. She is not interested at all in improving her education, nor has she any understanding of concepts such as "good" or "bad" language. She shows more shrewdness than Golding when she sees language as a clear barrier between them. Significantly, she refuses to talk to Golding after he has corrected her several times in their first meeting after being married (III, p. 4). And, although she does want to leave behind the worst aspects of her peers' behaviour such as drunkenness and prostitution, she refuses to reject their language, showing more awareness of social identity than Golding, a standard-English speaker in a working-class environment. The clash between these two opposed views of society is inevitable and is clearly voiced by Carrie:

"Why don't you let me speak as I'm used to? What's the good of tormenting me in that way. If you wanted to marry a grammar-machine you should have looked somewheres else, and not have taken up with me! You can understand what I mean, well enough, and what more do you want, I'd like to know?" (III, p. 10)

What Gissing exposes through this verbal conflict is but an example of the social conflicts of his time. Golding and Carrie Mitchell represent different social values and two irreconcilable linguistic codes. It is in Gissing's ability to channel that antagonism through their verbal characterizations that, to a great extent, the sociological merit of his novel lies.

The identification of language with behaviour and social status in *Workers in the Dawn* is

-- 18 --

also found in *The Nether World*. Thus, as Clem Peckover is likened to "a wild-beast tiger" or "a cunning and fierce animal," her speech, as well as sharing the phonological, syntactical and lexical characteristics of the vernacular of Clerkenwell, also possesses a distinctive feature which differentiates her from other dialect speakers: a recurrence of oaths and imprecations. This feature of her speech is a manifestation of her rude and coarse personality. Similarly, Sidney Kirkwood's honesty and impeccable behaviour are reflected in his language. He is a working man with the instincts of an artist who expresses himself in an educated variety of English far removed from Clem Peckover's speech.

The functions attached to both dialect and standard English are, however, far more complex in the case of Joseph Snowdon. The language of this *déclassé* figure is not confined to one variety. To fulfil his ambitions he consciously manipulates his speech, switching from non-standard English – when he speaks to the Peckovers – to more standard linguistic forms – when he addresses members of his family or Sidney Kirkwood. Indeed, his ability to adapt his language to the occasion and to different interlocutors is symptomatic of his social uprootedness. It is Joseph Snowdon's linguistic and social contradictions that make him a deeper and more complex character than any other in the novel.

When Gissing first introduces Joseph Snowdon, he is sitting in Mrs. Peckover's kitchen. He has just come back from America and has seen an advertisement in the newspaper inquiring about his whereabouts. Joseph is praising Clem Peckover's beauty in a bold way:

"Why, you're all a-blowin' and a-growin' this morning, Miss Peckover ... I shall begin to think that colour of yours ain't natural ... Why, let me see; you was not much more than a baby when I went away ... How many of the

-- 19 --

young chaps about here have been wanting to marry you ... Tell me about some o' them." (pp. 121-24)

While flattering Clem's vanity, he is at the same time conveying an atmosphere of group identity through his language. The Peckovers express themselves in Cockney and, in conversation with them, Joseph's speech includes a few non-standardisms such as the loss of *g* in spelling in the group *ng*, the apocope of consonants in monosyllabic words (*o'*), the use of the prefix *a-* with present participial forms, the presence of special negative forms of the verb *to be* (*ain't*) and the lack of agreement between subject and verb (*you was*). His syntax is structured in short periods and his vocabulary limited. The language of these dialogues contrasts sharply with that of his inner monologue:

"Here's this girl Clem, the finest bit of flesh I've seen for a long time; I've more than half a mind to see if she won't be fool enough to marry me. I'm not a bad-looking fellow, that's the truth, and she may have taken a real liking to me. Seems to me that I should have come in for a comfortable thing

in my old age; if I haven't a daughter to provide for my needs, at all events I shall have a wife who can be persuaded into doing so." (p. 124)

Now there is no trace of the non-standard phonology or morphology, except the omission of the subject in "Seems to me ...," found in his dialogue with the Peckovers, nor is he using the same syntactical structure. It has become as complex as his inner thoughts. Standard English then is "natural" to Joseph Snowdon and his use of non-standard forms, when speaking to the Peckovers, is the result of his conscious manipulation of the language, in order to ingratiate himself with them.

The change in his social status, brought about by his marriage to Clem, is shown in his

-- 20 --

language. Now the non-standardisms of the early dialogues become more sporadic, although his speech still retains the simple syntax and colloquialisms such as *rum*:

"Give me the corkscrew, and I'll open this bottle of whisky. It takes it out of a fellow, this kind of thing. Here's to you, Mrs. Clem! Have a drink?"
(p. 149)

Even in this short dialogue there appears the fairly colloquial feature, a noun phrase tag ("It takes it out of a fellow, this kind of thing").⁵ The prevailing tone of his language is still one of closeness, although ironic, as if Joseph were careful not to break the friendly in-group atmosphere he had created in the early stages of his relationship with Clem. And the reason for this care is that he has to be especially cautious when dealing with her. Gissing's descriptions of Clem often include adjectives such as "revengeful," "cunning" or "fierce." Accordingly, her language reflects these traits in her character. When one of her lovers, Bob Hewett, denies that he has been seeing another girl, Clem reacts, using a kind of vocabulary that Gissing avoids reproducing, following the conventions of what is known as "token speech":⁶

"It's a — lie!" Clem's epithet was too vigorous for reproduction. (p. 35)

Later, when she receives Joseph's final letter, after he has run away with his father's money, she rushes to see Jane Snowdon to demand an explanation of the letter. Her attitude is well reflected in the following authorial comment about her language:

You should have heard the sterling vernacular in which Clem gave utterance to her feelings as soon as she had deciphered the mocking letter! (p. 359)

This letter offers fresh evidence of the variety of Joseph's language. It is written in a

-- 21 --

formal style intended to be very sarcastic. The detached and precise prose, interspersed with terms of endearment, lends it an ironic and corrosive tone while revealing Joseph's ability to switch codes, as the following excerpt shows:

"Clem, old girl, I regret very much that affairs of pressing importance call me away from my happy home ... Do not repine, and do not break the furniture in the lodgings, as your means will henceforth be limited, I fear ... I shall of course send for you immediately, but it may happen that some little time will intervene before I am able to take that delightful

step ... All blessings upon you, and may you be happy. With tears I sign myself,
YOUR BROKEN-HEARTED HUSBAND”
(pp. 357-58)

The style of this letter resembles his language when speaking to Sidney Kirkwood, his daughter, Jane Snowdon, and his father, Michael Snowdon. This varies slightly, however, according to each interlocutor: it can be casual with Sidney Kirkwood, intimate with Jane Snowdon, or respectful with Michael Snowden; but it is always standard English.

After their first meeting, Joseph tries to gain Sidney’s confidence by seeming to talk with a great deal of earnestness. He wants to appear amiable and honest, when both leave Michael Snowdon’s house. Gissing says that for Joseph it was “impossible to speak with more engaging frankness” (p. 160). However, this friendly attitude does not entirely overcome Sidney’s suspicions. He is prejudiced against Joseph and often wonders about his intentions, thinking that Joseph’s face betrays him, although he cannot make up his mind because Joseph’s talk is at times “very persuasive and much like that of one who has been brought to a passable degree of honesty” (p. 162). Joseph takes advantage of these doubts and exploits Sidney’s scruples. He

-- 22 --

hints to Sidney that some people believe he will marry Jane Snowdon because of her supposed future inheritance. His speech when passing on the gossip is full of false starts and unfinished sentences; this broken syntax reflecting his false hesitation and his infinite care when “unwillingly” breaking the news (pp. 237-39). Later, however, when trying to convey an atmosphere of close familiarity by taking Sidney into his confidence, he adopts a casual tone from which the early hesitation has practically disappeared to give way to fluid speech:

“You do? I thought you and I could understand each other, if we only got really talking. Look here, Sidney; I don’t mind just whispering to you. For anything I know, Percival is saying disagreeable things to the old man; but don’t you worry about that. It don’t matter a scrap, you see ...” (p. 239)

The casual tone of his dialogue is also intensified by including terms of endearment such as *Janey*, *old man* or *old dad* and by introducing a non-standard feature such as the auxiliary form *don’t* for the third person singular in the extract above.

Joseph is anxious to be reconciled with his daughter after having deserted her in her childhood. This effort is present in their first conversation (pp. 149-51), in which his affection and geniality are expressed through terms of kinship and endearment (*dear*, *my dear*, *my own child*, *Janey* or *my love*), as well as a high proportion of pronominal forms – mainly of the second person – and a number of questions soliciting Jane’s agreement:

“Well, I’m quite sure I should never have known *you*, Janey... Don’t you remember your father? ... You’ve grown up a very nice, modest girl, Jane... I can see your grandfather has taken good care of you ... I suppose your grandfather has often spoken to you about me? ... And I suppose you just keep house for him, eh?”

-- 23 --

This informal register stresses his family membership and helps him to create a common background from which he can develop his relationship with his daughter⁷. He makes it his business to remove any hostile feelings from her mind, speaking to her in “his most paternal manner” (p. 303) on the subject of her relationship with Sidney Kirkwood. The dialogues

(pp. 303-05) in which he discusses Sidney's scruples exemplify Joseph's manipulation of the language to achieve his ends. He is very tactful as he tried to get his message across without hurting the girl's feelings, and he also picks his vocabulary very carefully. Therefore he draws heavily on the lexicon of kinship and endearment, seeking to appease the girl's feelings. Similarly, the presence of many auxiliary verbs makes his speech rich in meaningful nuances about his position as a father in the whole affair⁸:

“Now who should stand by you, in a case like this, if not your own father ... Now, as your father, Janey, I know it's right that you should be told of this. I feel you're being very cruelly treated, my child. And I wish to goodness I could only see any way out of it for you both. Of course I'm powerless either for acting or speaking: you can understand that.” (p. 305)

Joseph also has to appease his father. But, while informal, affectionate language is appropriate with Jane, the tone he adopts with his father is a formal, respectful and, at times, a humble one. As the author says:

His manner of speaking was meant to be very respectful ... He supplemented his sentences with gestures and smiles, glancing about the room meantime with looks of much curiosity. (p.153)

That is, Joseph's speech is that of someone addressing a person who is not of equal rank. His

-- 24 --

language is marked by the relationship father-son and the difference in age and social status. Whereas Joseph is married to a working-class girl, Michael Snowdon has money and is socially respected. The dialogues involving both characters show that Joseph's speech is always formal but that it also includes the lexicon of kinship (p. 163). The result of his patient pursuit and careful cultivation of Michael's feelings is that Joseph succeeds in overcoming his father's distrust:

In speaking with the old man he habitually subdued his voice, respectfully bending forward, solicitously watching the opportunity of a service. Michael had pleasure in his company and conversation. (pp. 302-03)

In the end, Joseph Snowdon collects his father's money after having deceived his friends and relatives. His deceptions, the result of his social ambitions, condition both his erratic behaviour and his ever-changing language. His personality emerges as the most powerful characterization in *The Nether World*. He is not a “flat” character but one who has deep psychological complexity, revealed through speech in his calculated keenness to adapt himself to every social circumstance.

The Town Traveller is the last novel in which Gissing includes a substantial amount of Cockney and, whereas in *Workers in the Dawn* and *The Nether World* it is associated with speech events such as quarrelling or abuse, in *The Town Traveller* it is related to everyday events and is the language of most of the characters in the novel. It is not seen here in relation to particularly offensive behaviour (such as Clem Peckover's), nor is it confined only to the lowest classes. In fact, it is spoken by a middle class character such as Mr. Gammon. He speaks Cockney to his friends or neighbours but uses standard English on occasion. Unlike Joseph

-- 25 --

Snowdon in *The Nether World*, whose choice of speech is a calculated step in his relationship with the inhabitants of Clerkenwell, dialect in Mr. Gammon's case is associated with an honest attempt to break the barriers of an otherwise highly stratified society. Within dialect, however, he switches from a slightly marked variety (as in talking to the servant, Moggie, or to Mrs. Bubb, his landlady) to a "broader" one (as in conversation with Polly Sparkes and her friends). In fact the use of "broad" dialect is related to situations of intimacy and courting and appears mainly in the dialogues involving Mr. Gammon and Polly Sparkes.⁹ Not always does he speak to Polly in dialect however; he switches to more standard forms when for example, he wants to show himself as a resourceful man and so adopts a fatherly role. The use of a standard variety of English also occurs in his dealings with Mrs. Clover, a middle-class shop owner whom Gissing endows with "positive" qualities such as irreproachable behaviour and fairly standard speech. However, not only does Mr. Gammon switch from dialect to standard English and back, or between varying levels of "broadness" within dialect, but in his verbal repertoire there are different registers generated both by his profession and his hobby.¹⁰

Mr. Gammon is a commercial traveller, always ready to do business; he is also a lover of dogs. He is depicted as a good-tempered character, ever ready for a joke; a distinctive feature of his speech is the recurrence of expletives such as *by jingo* or *by jorrocks*, usually uttered when in a festive mood. His hobby finds its way into his language, reflecting in the following passage the interest in dogs he shares with the lad who holds his horses:

Gammon invited the youngster to come and see his "bow wows" at Dulwich, and promised him his choice out of the litter of bull terriers. With animation he discoursed upon the points of this species of dog – the pure white coat;

-- 26 --

the long, lean, punishing head, flat above; the breadth behind the ears, the strength of back. He warned his young friend against the wiles of the "faker," who had been known to pipe-clay a mottled animal and deceive the amateur. (p. 22)

The wide range of terms connected with dogs present in the quotation above is supplemented elsewhere: *bow-wows*, *bull-pup*, *button-ear*, *litter*, *cobby little fox terrier*, *sweet little black-and-tan* or *bull-terrier*. Similarly, according to the occasion, his speech includes a substantial number of commercial terms related to his work: *specialties*, *oil and colour business*, *enterprise*, *place of business*, *man of business*, *a business-like way* or *permanency*. This specialized lexicon is strongly marked in his conversations with a fellow-commercial traveller, Mr. Greenacre.

This particular register affects Mr. Gammon's vocabulary, while his pronunciation and syntax are those of a standard English speaker. He uses a prestige variety also favoured by Mrs. Clover. In their relationship, standard English is associated with social respectability and, in that sense, Mrs. Clover clearly occupies a higher place in society than Mrs. Bubb or Polly Sparkes:

Mrs. Bubb swept and garnished her parlour for the becoming reception of a visitor whom she could not but "look up to." Mrs. Clover's origin was as humble as her own ... but natural gifts and worldly circumstances had set a distance between them ... With Polly Sparkes she did not hesitate to use freedom, for Polly could not pretend to be on a social level with her aunt ... (p. 39)

Mr. Gammon also seeks the company of those “whose voices rang the purest cockney” (p. 8). His switching to dialect on these occasions has nothing to do with a calculated manipulation of the language, but is rather an honest attempt to communicate with different interlocutors. Thus

-- 27 --

in the opening chapter, there is a dialogue between Mr. Gammon and Moggie, the servant, in which both characters use the same code:

“Mrs. Bubb wants to know if you know what time it is, sir? ’Cos it’s half-past eight an’ more.”

“All right!” sounded cheerfully from within. “Any letters for me?”

“Yes, sir; a ’eap”,

“Bring ’em up, and put ’em under the door ...” (p. 5).

The speech depicted in this dialogue is not strongly marked for dialect. Gissing introduces orthographic devices to show non-standard pronunciations such as the apocope of syllables in initial positions (*’Cos*), the elision of *d* in *and* and the dropping of the *h* (*’eap* and *’em*). Mr. Gammon normally expresses himself in this way when talking to his landlady, Mrs. Bubb. In their dialogues, his speech shows not only non-standard pronunciations (*’em*) but also special negative forms of the verb *to be* (*ain’t*). Moreover, he includes a few colloquialisms such as *rummiest*, *Johnnies* or *gooseberry*:¹¹

“The rummiest thing that that never came into my head! I shouldn’t be a bit surprised if Clover ain’t living in Belgrave Square, or some such place. Just the kind of thing that happens with these mysterious Johnnies ... What a gooseberry I was never to think of it! We’ll have ’em face to face!” (p. 38).

Mr. Gammon’s code switching shows the difficulties of his relationship with Polly Sparkes, a bad-tempered London working-class girl. She is said to have “a sharp tongue” (p. 16) that frequently makes difficult her dealings with her neighbours. Indeed, she is well-known and feared for her outbursts of bad temper. Unlike Clem Peckover, however, her speech is not marked by the use of taboo words.¹² Mr. Gammon tends to favour a “broad” dialect when he tries to calm the girl’s bad temper or when courting her. Though not always easily, he normally

-- 28 --

succeeds in creating an intimate atmosphere after one of their frequent arguments when he switches to a “broad” dialectal variety:

Polly looked up at the sky, and answered with a question:

“Do you think it’s going to rine?”

“Shouldn’t wonder.”

“Well, you are polite.”

“What’s the rine got to do with politeness?” ...

“I say, Polly, do you see you’ve left marks on my face?”

Polly set her lips and kept a severe silence.

“I don’t mind ’em,” Gammon continued, “Rather proud of ’em ...” (p. 52)

The vernacular – the diphthong /ai/ and the pronominal form *’em* are well-known features of Cockney¹³ – is also present in his conversations with Polly’s friends and becomes the

expression of social group identity as Mr. Gammon succeeds in dispelling their distrust:

“First rate!” exclaimed Mr. Nibby ... “You’ll have to join us; first rate. I’m only afraid it may rine. Do you think it will rine?”

“May or may not,” replied Gammon ... “If it’s going to rine, it will, you know.” (p. 52)

Mr. Gammon, however, switches to standard English when advising Polly in her search for her wealthy uncle, Lord Polperro. This code is associated with his fatherly role (he is far older than Polly), but he includes terms of endearment that give his speech a colloquial tone:

“Might have been managed, Polly ... What you’ve got to do, my angel, is to find where that lady lives ... Keep your eyes open, Polly, and be smart, and if you tell me where she lives then I shall have something more to say to you. It’s between you and me, my beauty.” (p. 58)

-- 29 --

Mr. Gammon, then, is a character constantly moving in different social spheres. His remarkable linguistic diversity is a result of his willingness to adapt himself through speech both to interlocutors from different social strata and to the occasion. While standard English is associated with social prestige or professional status, his use of Cockney is not related to quarrelling or abuse but to “neutral” events such as the discussion of household matters or in courting.

Gissing’s depiction of dialect in the three novels is consistent and his use of it flexible. While in the first novel dialect is seen mainly as a class marker, this “role-differentiating” function changes slightly in *The Nether World* and takes new forms in *The Town Traveller*. That in *Workers in the Dawn* Gissing also relates dialect to the worst aspects of human behaviour is shown in the somewhat schematic characterization of Carrie Mitchell, whose dialectal speech only becomes apparent as her behaviour deteriorates. This function of dialect as a clue to personality and behaviour is extended in Joseph Snowdon, in *The Nether World*, a complex character who uses dialect to further his social ambitions. His manipulation of the language, revealed by his ability to switch from dialect to standard English, shows Gissing’s concern for more elaborate forms of characterization. This same concern appears in full in the third novel studied in this paper, *The Town Traveller*. Here Gissing demonstrates a high degree of awareness of the interrelationship between language and social factors. By extensively incorporating sociolinguistic phenomena such as code-switching or bi-dialectalism in the creation of a multifaced figure like Mr. Gammon (an early example, though to a lesser extent, is Joseph Snowdon), Gissing may be said to have anticipated some of the findings of modern sociolinguistic enquiry.

1. References to these novels are from the following editions: *Workers in the Dawn* (New York:

-- 30 --

AMS Press, Inc., 1968), three vols.; *The Nether World* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1973); and *The Town Traveller* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1968). Subsequent references are in the text.

2. Code is used here and elsewhere as a neutral label to replace terms such as dialect, language or variety. See David Crystal, *A First Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (London: André Deutsch, 1980), p. 66.

3. Algernon and Ellen Gissing, *Letters of George Gissing to Members of his Family* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1931), p. 83.
4. I discuss this point in "George Gissing's attitude towards Language," *Anglo-American Studies*, IV, 2 (November 1984), pp. 203-04.
5. This feature of informal speech is discussed by Quirk in *A University Grammar of English* (London: Longman, 1973), pp. 428-29.
6. Norman Page, *Speech in the English Novel* (London: Longman, 1976), p. 92. Gissing made clear in *Workers in the Dawn* that he would not go beyond certain conventions when depicting "real speech," "under fear of being stigmatised as a 'realist' by the critical world" (I, p. 94).
7. Register is used here strictly in the sense of a speaker's ability to adjust his language to a given situation. See G. W. Turner, *Stylistics* (Penguin, 1979), p. 165.
8. On the use of the auxiliary verbs see John McH. Sinclair, "A Technique of Stylistic Description," *Language and Style*, I, (1968), p. 216.
9. This phenomenon also occurs in D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. See Richard Leith, "Dialogue and Dialect in D. H. Lawrence," *Style*, XIV, 3 (Summer 1980) p. 254.
10. Register in this context is identified with "occupational register," that is the linguistic variety "likely to occur in any situation involving members of a particular profession or occupation." See Peter Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics* (Penguin, 1979), p. 104.

-- 31 --

11. Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1963), pp. 712, 443 and 344 respectively.
12. Peter Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics, op. cit.*, pp. 29-32.
13. See William Mathews, *Cockney Past and Present*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 164-65.

Continuing the Debate

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Much discussion has taken place concerning Gissing's description of the image on the gate of the Middlesex House of Detention which appears in the opening chapter of *The Nether World*.¹ It seems, however, that while most readers agree upon the combined realistic and symbolic nature of the description, there is a surprising amount of confusion regarding the actual details of the prison gate. This confusion of historical facts has resulted in a number of interesting but decidedly "loose" interpretations of the literary significance of the image. I would offer a further reading of the passage based on the historical details as I have found them.

In his discussion of previous misreadings of the opening passage of *The Nether World*, Richard J. Allen makes a number of errors concerning several writers' descriptions of the prison gate image. To begin with, he assumes that Gissing was "employing calculatedly non-naturalistic techniques" in his description of the face which appears over the gateway of the

--32 --

House of Detention. This assumption is based on a remark by Besant in *London North of the Thames* (1911) in which he comments on du Maurier's transformation of the lion's head of the actual gate into the "agonised face" of the gate described in his novel *Peter Ibbetson* (1892).

According to Allen, this transformation which Besant attributes to du Maurier's "artistic licence" was actually borrowed from *The Nether World* which was published while du Maurier was writing *Peter Ibbetson*. Certainly as Allen suggests, du Maurier's reference to Dante supports the theory that he was familiar with Gissing's description of the House of Detention in *The Nether World*. However, the historical facts suggest that the descriptions of both novelists were based on realistic details with little "artistic licence" beyond the allusion to Dante, and that in fact, the discrepancy originated with Besant.

First of all, until 1890 there were two prison gates in the parish of Clerkenwell which had sculptured faces over their entrances. The first of these was located at the entrance to the Middlesex House of Correction, or Coldbath Fields Prison, as it was known and as Gissing refers to it in Chapter XXI of *The Nether World*. This prison, which dated from 1794, was a correctional institution for those serving short terms of imprisonment. Closed in 1885, its site was acquired in 1889 for the new Parcels and Telegraph Engineering Works services of the Post Office. While the prison itself was destroyed, the gateway was incorporated into the plan of the Post Office buildings and remained intact until 1901. *The Builder* (February 16, 1901) carried a description of the gate before its demolition:

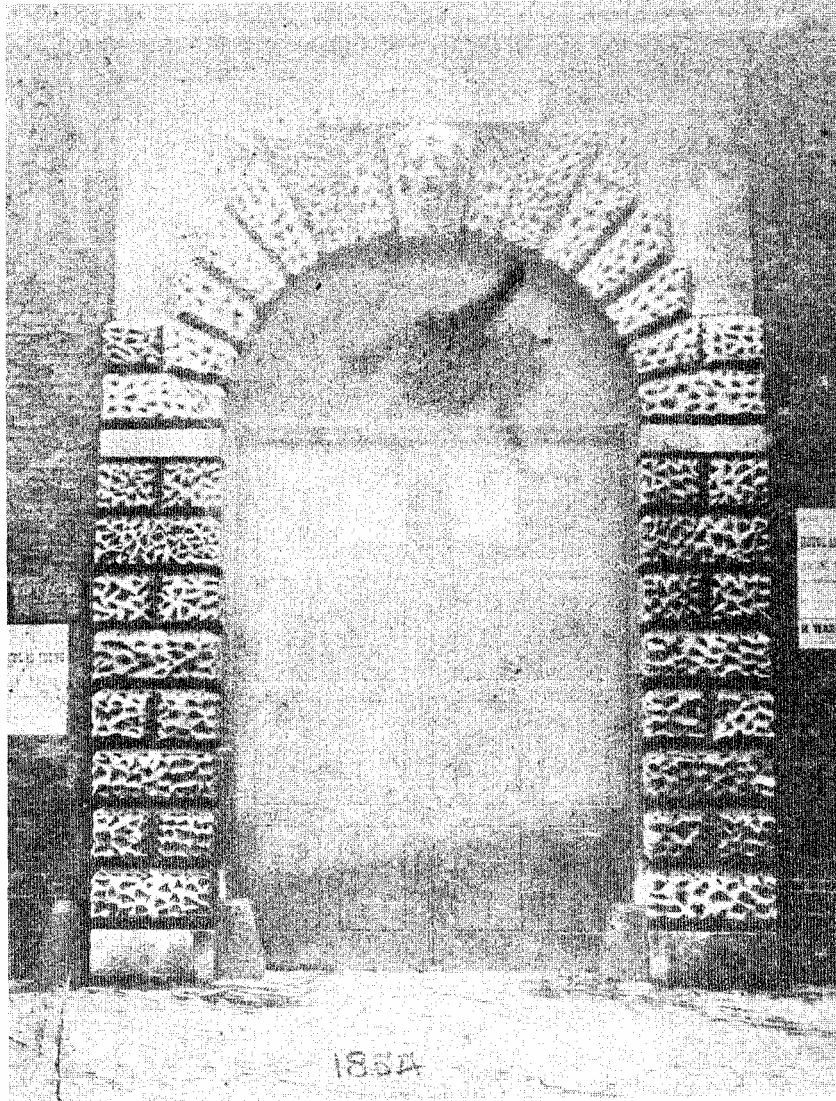
The stone gateway, having a lion's head and rusticated voussoirs around the arch and inner piers in the archway, is the last of its kind in London. It has retained the original doors with their two big iron knockers, but the linked fetters on the outer piers and the inscription beneath the cornice – "1794 Middlesex House of Correction 1866" – have been removed.

-- 33 --

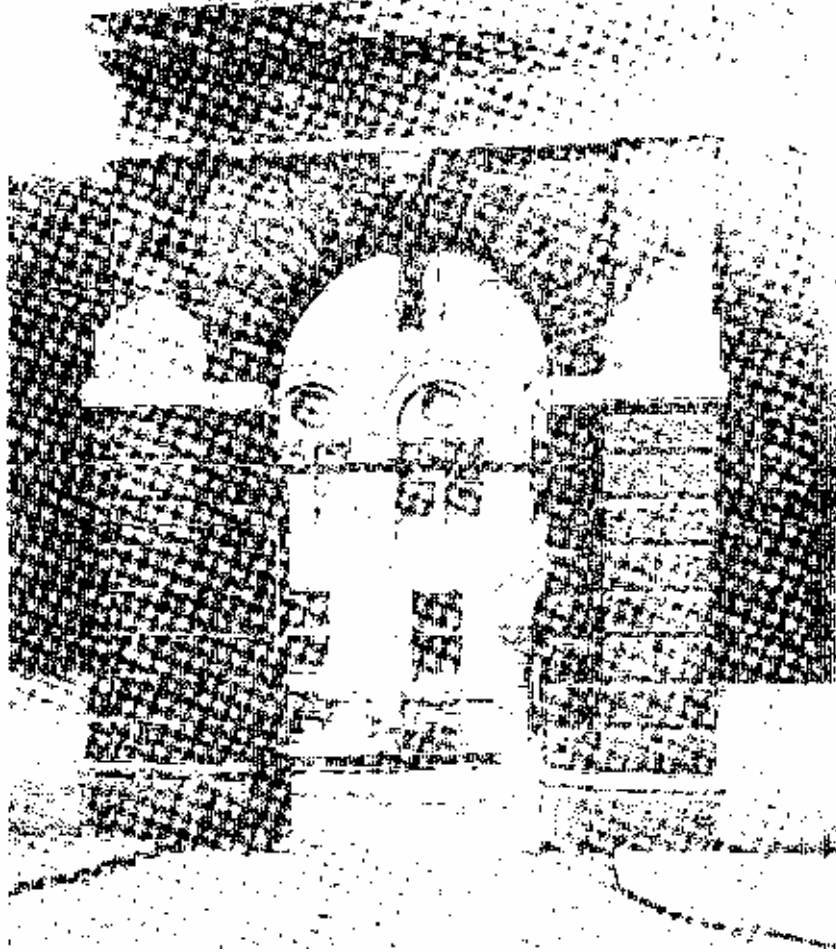
It would appear that this was the gate that Besant had in mind when he wrote *London North of the Thames*. The confusion, however, is understandable. Less than a quarter of a mile from the entrance to the House of Correction was another gateway belonging to the Middlesex House of Detention, an interim-stay institution for debtors, deserters, and those awaiting trial. The House of Detention was erected between 1846-47 on the site of the Clerkenwell New Prison. W. Pinks in his *History of Clerkenwell*, (1865) describes the gate of the former New Prison: "it was built of stone, and boldly rusticated; on the keystone was sculptured a large head expressive of criminal despair and anguish; over this was suspended a chain with handcuffs at the ends, and on either side was a pair of iron fetters; a cornice surmounted the whole."² The evidence provided by Pinks and by a contemporary photograph suggests that when the House of Detention was built the same gateway was retained although the handcuffs and fetters were removed. While Allen claims that the House of Detention was destroyed in 1886, *The Builder* recorded the closure of the prison in 1886 and the purchase of the site and its buildings by the School Board in 1888. According to the same source the buildings were pulled down in 1890 to make way for the construction of the Hugh Myddleton School which was opened in 1893.³ Following this chronology it is almost certain that Gissing would have seen the gateway of the House of Detention during his visits to Clerkenwell in 1888. At the same time, the close corroboration of details between du Maurier's engraving of the gateway in *Peter Ibbetson* and an 1854 photograph suggests that he also visited the gateway before its demolition in 1890. In any case, Allen's argument for Gissing's "imaginative modification of a historical landmark" demands reassessment.

Previous interpretations of Gissing's description of the House of Detention gateway have

-- 34 --



Middlesex House of Detention
1854
(Courtesy of Finsbury Reference Library,
London EC1V 4NB)



Mount Pleasant Post Office Gateway
1900
(Courtesy of Finsbury Reference Library,
London EC1V 4NB)

--36 --

focused on the elements of individual frustration and class struggle rather than on those of fear, torture, and madness. Yet the concept of punishment being imposed to increase the fear of poverty rather than to deal with its causes or alleviate its problems recurs throughout the novel in images of crime, madness, and torture. As Allen points out, in *The Nether World* Gissing confronts “the harsh realities ... of an inexorably punitive law.” In two particular instances the confrontation is direct. The first is the newspaper account of Margaret Barnes’s trial in Chapter VI, an episode which closely resembles the “Wragg in Custody” passage in Arnold’s *Essays in Criticism*. The second is a short section in Chapter XXIV which questions society’s “conventional point of view” in condemning individuals like Bob Hewett for their crimes while denying responsibility for dealing with conditions which prey upon human weakness. Both episodes convey the experience of being trapped in a world where “poverty makes a crime of every indulgence.” The opening image of the traveller at the House of Detention gateway is central to the development of this theme. The parallel of this description with Canto Three of the *Inferno* is unmistakable:

I AM THE WAY INTO THE CITY OF WOE
I AM THE WAY TO A FORSAKEN PEOPLE
I AM THE WAY INTO ETERNAL SORROW

...

ABANDON ALL HOPE YE WHO ENTER HERE.

These mysteries I read cut into stone
above a gate.

The poor in Gissing's novel are forsaken by a social and economic system which imprisons them in a life of fear and suffering, ignoring their struggle to maintain themselves while administering to them with self-help policies. The physical landscape embodies the mental and physical anguish of the inhabitants as Gissing, following Dante, uses iconography to reveal the contradictions of social reality. Similarly, following the tradition of Biblical

-- 37 --

prophecy, Mad Jack's dream is a comment on contemporary social injustice:

"This life you are now leading is that of the damned; this place to which you are confined is Hell. There is no escape for you. From poor you shall become poorer; the older you grow the lower shall you sink in want and misery; at the end there is waiting for you, one and all, a death in abandonment and despair. This is Hell – Hell – Hell!"

Mad Jack is a grotesque incarnation of the terrifying madness of the sculptured face. In fact, during moments of distress the face on the prison gate reappears on the faces of other characters in the novel. In this way Gissing suggests that the degeneration of individual character is the result of an environmental conditioning process. The process is reversed when Jane Snowdon comes under the care of her grandfather:

To begin with, she had grown a little; only a little, but enough to give her the appearance of her full thirteen years. Then her hair no longer straggled in neglect, but was brushed very smoothly back from her forehead, and behind was plaited in a coil of perfect neatness; one could see now that it was soft, fine, mouse-coloured hair, such as would tempt the fingers to the lightest caress ... As for her face – oh yes, it was still the good, simple, unremarkable countenance, with the delicate arched eyebrows, with the diffident lips, with the cheeks of exquisite smoothness, but so sadly thin. Here too, however, a noteworthy change was beginning to declare itself. You were no longer distressed by the shrinking fear which used to be her constant expression; her eyes no longer reminded you of a poor animal that has been beaten from every place where it sought rest and no longer expects anything but a kick and a curse. Timid they were, drooping after each brief

-- 38 --

glance, the eyes of one who has suffered and cannot but often brood over wretched memories, who does not venture to look far forward lest some danger may loom inevitable.

The references to straggling hair, fear, and torture recall the details of the opening image. Yet Jane's former condition was not simply the result of her experience in the Peckover household. As a child of the nether world she is subject to larger influences. Allen suggests that "the hair's 'maniac disorder' ... emblematises the anarchic strife which is endemic in the lower depths but which the novel also shows to be a product of the social and economic laws from above."

More than any other character in the novel, John Hewett represents the victimisation of the poor by the socio-economic system. The most significant recurrence of the opening motif takes place on Clerkenwell Green when John Hewett is making a speech on the question of rent:

... after the first few words he seemed to be overcome by rage that was little short of frenzy ... his visage was frightfully distorted, and in a few minutes there actually fell drops of blood from his bitten lip. ... It was terrible to look at him when at length he made his way out of the crowd; his face was livid, his eyes bloodshot, a red slaver covered his lips and beard.

Later when his wife is on her deathbed and he has no means to pay for her burial, the image appears again: "His face was like that of some prisoner, whom the long torture of a foul dungeon has brought to the point of madness." Other characters experience fits of madness brought on by the stress of poverty. In each case there is a distortion of their natural countenance which recalls the sculptured face on the prison gate. When Clara is faced with the

--39 --

choice of returning home a failure or sacrificing her respectability to Scawthorne's proposal, she has a violent fit, and later on the night of her *début* she is already marked by signs of degradation: "Still a beautiful face, its haughty characteristics strengthened, the lips a little more sensual, a little coarser; still the same stamp of intellect upon the forehead, the same impatient scorn and misery in her eyes." When she returns to Clerkenwell after her accident, her face permanently disfigured, she has another fit in which she considers suicide as an alternative to her tortured existence behind a veil in Farringdon Road Buildings.

Although Clara embodies the most violent transfiguration of the sculptured face, she retains enough of her original strength and beauty to seduce Sidney into sharing her fate. In contrast, Stephen and Maria Candy lose all traces of human countenance. When Bob Hewett takes refuge in their room in Shooter's Gardens he finds Stephen whose "arms and legs were those of a living skeleton" and whose "idiotic face was made yet more repulsive by disease" and his mother who "leaned her head upon her hand and began a regular moaning, as if she suffered some dull, persistent pain." Thus the sculpture's enduring presence is capsulated in the perpetual suffering of Stephen and Maria Candy. In his story "The Record of Badalia Herodsfoot" (1890), Kipling uses a similar combination of disease and animal imagery to conclude his portrait of the unrelenting torture of slum existence: "...when the carriages rattled off, the cat on the doorstep heard the wail of the dying prostitute who could not die."

While one may choose to see Gissing's use of the prison gate image as "an imaginative modification of a historical landmark," there can be no doubt that his perception of the relationship between the physical and social dimensions of contemporary reality effectively places him in the naturalist tradition.

-- 40 --

NOTES:

1. John Goode, "George Gissing's *The Nether World*" in David Howard, John Lucas, and John Goode (eds.), *Tradition and Tolerance in Nineteenth Century Fiction* (London, 1966); and Adrian Poole, *Gissing in Context* (London, 1975), pp. 89-90; more recently, Richard J. Allen, "Documentary Realism and Artistic Licence: A Note on an Emblematic Prison Gate in *The Nether World* and *Peter Ibbetson*," *Gissing Newsletter*, XVII, No. 2 (April, 1981), pp. 20-25.
2. W. Pinks, *History of Clerkenwell*, revised edition (London, 1881), p. 185.
3. *The Builder*, LXII (December 23, 1893), p. 475.

Notes and News

Patricia Alden, who published an article in the July 1981 number of this Journal, reports that she is preparing a book with the tentative title of *Studies in Social Mobility: Gissing, Hardy, Bennett and Lawrence*, which is scheduled to appear under the imprint of the UMI Research Press in July 1986. The Gissing chapter will contain the substance of the *Newsletter* article.

Special attention is drawn to the article published by Robert L. Selig in the October-December 1985 number of *Études Anglaises*. Starting from Whelpdale's admittedly autobiographical adventures in the journalistic world of Chicago, Professor Selig has conducted a thorough enquiry among the collections of the Chicago Historical Society and found a photograph of the man who indubitably encouraged Gissing to write the short stories which appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* – Samuel John Medill, the newspaper's managing editor. A wealth of significant biographical details is supplied in the article and a very good photograph of Medill in 1876 enables one to assess the accuracy of Gissing's description of his benefactor

-- 41 --

in *New Grub Street*. A copy of this particular number of *Études Anglaises* should be on the shelves of anyone interested in Gissing. Orders will not be sent in vain to the publisher of the *Newsletter* in Dorking.

The German magazine, entirely devoted to Gissing, which was brought out last December in advance of the German translation of *New Grub Street*, is, from the collector's point of view, a Gissing item in its own right. Like the firm which publishes the book, it is entitled *Die andere Bibliothek* and can be obtained gratis from the director of the firm, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Greno Verlagsgesellschaft, Postfach 1145, D-8860 Nördlingen, West Germany. The magazine contains an introduction by Herr Enzensberger in which a parallel is drawn between the literary market of the 1880s in London and the literary market of the present day. He points out the boldness of Biffen's "realistic method" as compared with that of the standard Victorian novel and with the naturalism of Zola, hinting at the realization of Biffen's programme by the hero of another great book, Leopold Bloom, some thirty years later. The introduction is followed by translations of Virginia Woolf's and George Orwell's well-known judgments on Gissing's achievement, and a key passage on *New Grub Street* in the letter to Eduard Bertz of 26 April 1891. A few representative extracts from the novel are interspersed with pithy dicta from the same source and pictures by Hogarth and Rowlandson which establish the connection with the Grub Street tradition, while more personal notes are struck towards the end with excerpts from Gissing's diary about *New Grub Street* (1890, 1891 and 1892), a letter from Wulfhard Heinrichs to a German friend about the major aspects of the novelist's life and work, and a poem in prose by Johannes Edfeldt, "In Erinnerung an George Gissing" (In Memory of George Gissing). This

poem, originally published in 1984, had escaped the notice of all scholars and bibliographers, but not that of Hans Magnus Enzensberger.

-- 42 --

Two well-known portraits of Gissing, the drawing by William Rothenstein and the Elliott & Fry photograph reproduced in Robert Shafer's edition of *Workers in the Dawn*, a photograph of a London street (probably the Strand), a facsimile of the title page of the first edition of *New Grub Street* and a list of Gissing's books from *Workers in the Dawn* to *The House of Cobwebs* complete the record.

The book, no longer entitled *Ein Mann des Tages* as in the *Pester Lloyd* serial of 1892, but *Zeilengeld*, will be published on 18 January 1986.

Clifford Brook sends the following extract from *Foreign Affairs*, a novel by Alison Lurie published in 1985. P. 149 reads in part:

“Fred [Turner] has found himself telling Mrs. Harris stories [stories about Mrs. Harris] to friends like the Vogelers. In spite of her ill-temper, she has been gradually assimilated into his image of England. Most American visitors – like, say, Vinnie Miner – are attracted mainly to the antique, the picturesque, and the noble aspects of Britain. Fred's love is wider-ranging: essentially it comprehends whatever has been hymned in song or told in story. In his present high mood [being in love with a beautiful and aristocratic actress] he embraces even what he might deplore in America. Slag heaps remind him of Lawrence, pawnshops of Gissing; the pylons that deface the Sussex hills suggest Auden, the sooty slums of South London, Doris Lessing.”

The character Fred Turner is an American associate professor of English at a good university who has come to England for six months to research his topic, eighteenth-century English literature.

The author, Alison Lurie, is a professor of English at Cornell University and has written other novels including *The War Between the Tates*.

-- 43 --

P. F. Kropholler has discovered one more quotation from Gissing in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, under “to impaste.” This verb occurs in *A Life's Morning* (I, VII, p. 290). Perhaps in some future supplement to the *O. E.D.* the adjective “Reardonesque” could be recorded. It occurred in the *T. L. S.* for 18 October 1985, p. 1170, in an article entitled “The Not-Writing World,” by J. K. L. Walker.

The fact that Penguin Books have once more reprinted *New Grub Street* seems to indicate these publishers are determined to keep the book in print at least as long as the Hogarth Press or the Harvester Press does not produce an edition at a comparable price. No rival edition has been announced so far and Penguin Books are already planning an eighth impression for October 1986. Considering that a number of misprints have been corrected since the first Penguin impression (1968), it is suggested that the bibliography be brought up to date. It was only moderately adequate eighteen years ago and it now looks old-fashioned to an extent which proves embarrassing to all academic “users” of the novel.

Recent Publications

Volumes

George Gissing, *The Emancipated*, New Introduction by John Halperin, London: The Hogarth Press, 1985. Pp. [xii] + v-viii + 456 + two blank leaves. Pictorial cover. The front cover shows "Oriana" by Anthony Sandys. Paperback £3.95.

George Gissing, *Born in Exile*, New Introduction by Gillian Tindall, London: The Hogarth Press, 1985 Pp. [xiv] + 8-506 + one blank leaf. Pictorial cover. The front cover shows "The

-- 44 --

Rake" by Louis Huvey. Paperback £3.95.

George Gissing, *Will Warburton*, New introduction by John Halperin, London: The Hogarth Press, 1985. Pp. [xii] + 5-333 + 6 pp. advertisements + one blank leaf. Pictorial cover. The front cover shows a self-portrait of Charles Spencelayh. Paperback £3.95.

George Gissing, *The Whirlpool*, New Introduction by Gillian Tindall, London: The Hogarth Press, 1984. Pp. [xiv] + 453 + 4 pp. advertisements + four blank leaves. Pictorial cover. The front cover shows "Denise" by Herbert Gustave Schmaltz. Paperback £3.95. This title is not a reprinting, but a recovering of the 1984 Hogarth Press edition. The cover is uniform with those of the other three titles, but the book is slightly smaller and has no portrait of Gissing as a frontispiece. The editorial material is the same as in the 1984 edition.

George Gissing, *New Grub Street*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985. Pp. 556 + one blank leaf + 2 pp. advertisements. This is a new impression (the seventh) with a new pictorial cover which shows "Harold Battiscombe at his desk" by Harold Gilman. The book is now a title in the Penguin Classic and is published at £3.95.

Dennis Shruballs and Pierre Coustillas, eds., *Landscapes and Literati: Unpublished Letters of W. H. Hudson and George Gissing*, Wilton, near Salisbury: Michael Russell (Publishers) Ltd., 1985, Pp. [vii] + 151. Green cloth with gilt titling on spine, green jacket with white titling. £12.95. This volume contains all the letters (known to the editors) exchanged by W. H. Hudson and the Gissing brothers: 17 from W. H. Hudson to George, 28 from Hudson to Algernon and one from Hudson to Gabrielle Fleury (46 out of a total of 100 in the volume), also the 9 surviving letters

-- 45 --

from George Gissing to Hudson. The rest of the correspondence consists of letters to William Canton, the Ranee Margaret of Sarawak, Wilfred Scawen Blunt, Grant Richards and John Masfield among others.

Michael Collie, *George Gissing: A Bibliographical Study*, Winchester: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1985. Pp. xiii + 167 + one blank leaf. Blue cloth with gilt titling on spine. The jacket reproduces the pictorial cover of the American edition of *The Town Traveller*. £28 (post free if remittance is sent with order). The publisher's address is West End House, 1 Step Terrace, Winchester, Hampshire S022 5BW. This edition is limited to 500 copies.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Linda Dowling, "Roman Decadence and Victorian Historiography," *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 28, no. 4, Summer 1985, pp. 579-607. Refers to *Veranilda*. The same number contains the annual Gissing bibliography.

Anthony Curtis, "Positive Approach to Existence," *Financial Times*, 10 August 1985, page unknown. Review of *Frederic Harrison: The Vocations of a Positivist* and of *Workers in the Dawn*.

Nigel Cross, "Paperback Reprints: The Anatomy of Literary Survival," *Times Literary Supplement*, 27 September 1985, pp. 1067-68. Contains a short yet significant passage on Gissing and the announcement of a collected paperback edition of Gissing's works to be published by the Hogarth Press.

Pierre Coustillas, "Letters: Paperbacks," *Times Literary Supplement*, 18 October 1985, p. 1175. A letter to the editor of the journal about the various paperback editions of Gissing's novels, especially those published by the Harvester Press.

-- 46 --

David Holloway, "Hard Lives of the Hacks," *Daily Telegraph*, 18 October 1985, p. 16. Review of *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth-Century Grub Street*, by Nigel Cross. Contains a short passage on Gissing.

Francesco Badolato, "George Gissing in Calabria," *Calabria* (the monthly journal of the Regional Council), 13th year, New Series no. 4, October 1985, p. 74.

Anon., "Recensioni: I contrasti interiori di George Gissing," *Il Cittadino*, 7 November 1985, p. 16. Review of *George Gissing: Antologia Critica*.

Robert L. Selig, "Gissing's Benefactor at the *Chicago Tribune*: An Identification from a Passage in *New Grub Street*," *Études Anglaises*, Vol. 38, no. 4, October-December 1985, pp. 434-41. An important article which throws vivid light on an obscure moment in Gissing's early life. A portrait of Gissing's benefactor is included.

Pierre Coustillas, "Tess of the d'Urbervilles ou le dernier vol de la pureté," *Fabula* (a journal published by the University of Lille), no. 6, 1985, pp. 107-27. An article on *Tess* and the seduced girl tradition in Victorian fiction, with references to *The Unclassed*.

Pierre Coustillas, "Foreign Correspondence: ELT Authors in France and Other European Countries," *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920*, Vol. 28, no. 3, 1985, pp. 271-75. Contains some Gissing news.

John Sloan, "The 'Worthy' Seducer: A Motif under Stress in George Gissing's *In the Year of Jubilee*," *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920*, Vol. 28, no. 4, 1985, pp. 354-65.

Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate (eds.), *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, Volume

-- 47 --

Five: 1914-1919, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985. Gissing appears on page 26 in a letter to

Edward Clodd.

Pierre Coustillas, "The Political Opinions of George Gissing: A Survey," in *Elizabethan and Modern Studies*, Presented to Professor William Schrickx on the occasion of his retirement. Edited by J. P. Vander Motten, Gent. Seminarie voor Engelse en Amerikaanse Literatuur, Rijksuniversiteit Gent, 1985, pp. 67-74.

"Gissing," *Die andere Bibliothek*, 1986, no. 1. This is a 32-page magazine entirely devoted to Gissing and the forthcoming German translation of *New Grub Street*. See "Notes and News."