

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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A Word for Algernon Gissing

Dennis Butts
Reading

Very little seems to have been known about the life of George Gissing’s brother Algernon and even that seems to have attracted very little sympathy from the commentators. A. C. Young’s note on him for his otherwise admirably edited *Letters of George Gissing to Eduard Bertz* (Constable, 1961) tartly records:

Algernon had neither great creative skill nor exceptional intellectual energy; his novels did not grow out of a necessity to write but, more likely, from a powerful wish to clamber over the social barriers he found facing him as a result of his birth. As a writer, he could think himself outside the class structure, and in time, he could forget that his father was a shopkeeper. (p. XXXII)

Jacob Korg is even briefer, telling us only that Algernon “lived in inexpensive country cottages with his wife and child, scribbling his inoffensive and unprofitable novels, and wondering what to do.” (Korg, p. 61)

That George Gissing did not share the commentators’ view is evident from a variety of sources from the advice he gave Algernon about novel-writing, and from the advice he sought in that direction himself about various legal matters in his own novels; from the warmth he usually evinced when talking about his brother’s books; from the frequency of their visits and exchanges; and from the more practical convenience he made of Algernon at times, in taking charge of Walter, for example, when George prepared to leave Edith in 1897; from his choice of Algernon as co-executor of his Will, and for his presentation of the manuscripts of his novels. All of this suggests that there was rather more to Algernon than is generally supposed, and the purpose of this essay is to put together such facts as are generally available about him.

He was George’s youngest brother, of course, born at Wakefield on November 25th, 1860 after George (1857) and William (1859), but before the two sisters, Margaret (1863) and Ellen (1867). He seems to have passed an uneventful childhood, despite the father’s death in 1870, and went to boarding-school at Lindow Grove School, Alderley Edge, Cheshire, at the same time as his older brothers in 1871. Indeed the normality of these years is stressed by the caricature George himself made of Algernon at the age of 14, showing him as an untidy boy, fond of playing the piano and catching newts. A preference for reading *Martin Rattler* at this age is not exactly reprehensible.

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In the years of George’s tragic dismissal from Owens College to prison and America, and

of William's death in 1880, Algernon almost disappears from view. These cannot have been very easy years for him, the only man, and only just that, in a household shattered by two tragedies in such a short time. He seems to have kept up his studies, however, for he was certainly congratulated by George for getting a "first class" in 1878, but in what subject is not exactly clear, though law studies may be becoming important, for George begins asking him questions about legal problems in some of his stories around this time. It seems unlikely that Algernon was already a qualified solicitor, as he was only eighteen years of age.

In 1881, however, Algernon visited George, who was now living in London, and stayed with him at least until the middle of 1882. As well as finding time for such innocent amusements as a visit to the London Zoo to see the famous elephant Jumbo, Algernon was busy studying, and his examination success in May was evidently well-merited. This was probably the law qualification needed to become a solicitor.

In 1883, however, Algernon perhaps disappointed with the way law was going in Wakefield, or perhaps already finding it impossible to stifle his literary ambitions in pursuit of a "safe" career, sent George a copy of a letter he had sent to the Wakefield paper. George evidently praised it, and presumably gave Algy further encouragement, for a year later we find George sending Algernon a three-page outline for a short story which Algernon was to write. This coaching went on for some time, we gather, though in 1884 George began to have some doubts of Algernon's ability as a story-writer and suggested that essays might be more suited to his talents. But Algernon, like George himself, was not easily to be discouraged, for we find that in 1887 he has not only married a girl called Katie, and moved to Broadway, Worcestershire, but is being praised for his writing by George, and is having his own novel published.

This was called *Joy Cometh in the Morning*, and was published by Hurst and Blackett in two volumes in 1888. Though it was no best seller, it sold 329 copies by April 1889 as compared with 400 copies of *Thyrza*, and earned Algernon £16 as well as some words of praise from George: "The treatment, the style, are not to be compared with those of the average work of fiction. Here and there I find admirable bits of writing, especially those passages in the first volume descriptive of scenery in foreground [...] the book is a good book, a greatly promising book." (*Letters*, pp 212-13) A second novel, *Both of This Parish*, was published in 1889, by the same publishers, earning Algernon £25 this time, but the bad health of Katie forced them to give up their home at Smallbrook Cottage, Broadway, later in the year and move to Harbottle in Northumberland with their baby daughter, Enid, who had been born in November 1888.

The end of this decade saw both brothers almost submerged by domestic anxieties. Harassed beyond endurance by the circumstances of his second marriage to Edith in 1897, George decided to leave her, and relied a good deal on Algernon's help in looking after his son

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Walter, and in disposing of furniture. He even thought of setting up home with Algernon in 1898, but may have thought better of this when he heard that Edith had actually turned up at Algernon's cottage – he was living in Worcestershire again – looking for her missing husband.

Algernon, for his part, was almost equally distracted by momentary difficulties. Despite the production of ten novels since 1888, his growing family – by 1898 he had three children – and ailing wife took all that he earned; and his delicate idylls of rural life never earned much,

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not even when his book, *A Village Hampden* (1890) was given a wider public by the Conservative statesman, A. J. Balfour, who expressed his admiration of it in a speech. By 1897 Algernon was talking of becoming a clergyman. By January 1899, his health was so broken that the rest of the family contributed £150 for him to convalesce, of which George contributed £50. And in June 1902 Ellen wrote to H. G. Wells to see if he could find a post for Algernon which would provide him with a small income but not check his writing. Wells could only pass the

request on to Edmund Gosse who was able to secure Algernon £100 from the Royal Literary Fund.

Nothing perhaps brings out the quality of the respect and fraternal love for each other that existed between the two brothers as much as the letters they exchanged in that year. In January Algernon heard of the happiness of George's union with Gabrielle Fleury, and his letter to his brother, written in the shade of the old Queen's death, still reads well across the years:

You can't think how relieved I am to find that my harassing picture of you in hired hands and remote from all personal and affectionate care is a mistake. Thinking I knew, Margaret has only just mentioned the domestic tie you have formed. I can't enough rejoice that you have had this solace so long, and the fact renews my hope that you will yet recover a good share of your old health. Pray give my sincerest greetings to your good, brave more-than-wife.

And George, writing later in the same year, characteristically ends: "I do earnestly hope that your path may be smoother before long; it has been a terribly hard fight..."

George's own path was itself to be smoother before long, for he was dead less than twelve months after penning these words to his brother. Algernon, however, struggled on for another thirty-odd years. Stories, short-stories and guide-books continued to flow from him until the outbreak of the war, while his friendship with the naturalist, W. H. Hudson, shows the respect he was treated with, even while his books failed to reach the wider public. Probably the best remark on Algernon's books is the one made by George on *A Moorland Idyll* of 1891. "It is not strong," said George to Eduard Bertz, "but there is some good writing in it, and the fresh moorland spirit is really refreshing." (May 1st, 1892)

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Algernon's services to George were not yet over, however, for in collaboration with his sister Ellen he helped produce the best memorial to George's sad and tormented, but fundamentally heroic life that we have: *The Letters of George Gissing to Members of his Family*, published by Constable in 1927. By now Algernon's five children were growing up and he himself was ageing.

A naturalist and botanist all his life, he had always been a great walker of the countryside till within the last few years of his life, there gathering the materials for his books. And there, at Bloxham, near Banbury in Oxfordshire, he died on February 5th, in 1937.

A Checklist of Books by Algernon Gissing

Published by Hurst and Blackett: 1888, *Joy Cometh in the Morning*; 1889, *Both of This Parish*; 1890, *A Village Hampden*; 1891, *A Moorland Idyl*; 1892, *The Masquerader*; 1893, *Between Two Opinions*; 1894, *At Society's Expense*; *A Vagabond in Arts*; 1896, *The Sport of Stars*. Published by Hutchinson: 1897, *The Scholar of Bygate*. Published by Chatto and Windus: 1900, *A Secret of the North Sea*; 1901, *The Wealth of Mallerstang*. Published by Methuen: 1902, *The Keys of the House*. Published by Chatto and Windus: 1903, *Knitters in the Sun*; *An Angel's Portion*. Published by Arrowsmith: 1904, *Arrows of Fortune*. Published by Dent's Temple Topographies: 1904, *Broadway*. Published by Chatto and Windus: 1905, *Balliol Garth*. Published by Dent's Temple Topographies: 1905, *Ludlow and Stokesay*. Published by John Long: 1906, *The Master of Pinsmead*. Published by Chatto and Windus: 1907, *The Dreams of Simon Usher*. Published by John Long: 1908, *Second Selves*. Published by White and Co: 1909, *The Unlit Lamp*; 1910,

Love in the Byways; *The Herdsman*; 1911, *Rosanne*; *One Ash*; 1912, *The Top Farm*; 1913, *A Dinner of Herbs*. Published by Dent: 1924, *The Footpath Way in Gloucestershire*. Published by Constable: in 1927, *The Letters of George Gissing* (edited with Ellen Gissing).

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Gissing in the *Times Lit Sup*

An exceptionally interesting series of letters followed the review of four books connected with Gissing which appeared in the London *Times Literary Supplement* last June 27th. Since Gissing has never before, to our knowledge, occupied so conspicuous a position in the press, the *Newsletter* herewith reprints (by permission) the original review and the ensuing correspondence. We welcome any comment our readers may care to make on the various opinions expressed. All of the material was headlined "Going Into Gissing."

1.

Review of: *New Grub Street*, Edited with an introduction by Bernard Bergonzi, Penguin; *The Odd Women*, Anthony Blond; *Gissing: "New Grub Street"*, by P. J. Keating, Edward Arnold; *Collected Articles on George Gissing*, edited by Pierre Coustillas, Frank Cass.

The wind seems set fair for a Gissing revival. The place of *New Grub Street* as one of the key English novels about the literary life has been emphasized by two previous editions since the war, and it now appears, for the third time of asking, as a Penguin, introduced by Bernard

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Bergonzi. It also gets its first monographist in P. J. Keating. Mr. Bergonzi, a Wellsian who knows about Gissing, makes the point that the tree-volume novel which Gissing wrestled with for most of his working life "assumes the roles of major though silent character." One of the books in which Gissing managed best with a single theme – what happens to unmarried females on the breadline – within the great open spaces of the three-decker was *The Odd Women*, and this also reappears in Blond's Doughty Library, with an introduction by Frank Swinnerton.

Moreover, many of the scattered essays urging Gissing's importance, in academic journals and elsewhere, over the past fifty years have been put together by Pierre Coustillas in *Collected Articles on George Gissing*. Some of the subtitles of these indicate the kind of claim which the Gissingites have made for Gissing during this time – "Humanist," "Portrayer of Society," "The Permanent Stranger," "...and Dostoyevski," "...and Schopenhauer," "Poet of Fatigue," "A Novelist of the Hour."

Gissing's most distinguished admirers, Virginia Woolf, George Orwell and Middleton Murry, do, it is true, strike a note of more powerful urgent-seeming enthusiasm, but only by seeing in Gissing's work a more interesting reflection of their own concerns than is immediately apparent to the common reader; thus Orwell praised him for his understanding of money (and the lack of it) and Murry for his understanding of women (and the lack of them). Perhaps most critics who "go into" Gissing (and it is quite a descent) end by being really rather appalled by him; there is something peculiarly terrifying in the way he would describe a particularly hellish fate – that of an unsuccessful author married to a woman who is his intellectual inferior in *New Grub Street*, for instance – and then himself live out the hell in minute blow-by-blow terms in his own life *after* the book was published, a nasty case of life imitating art all too slavishly.

Virginia Woolf was not herself afraid of Gissing or appalled by him (her essay on him is

not included presumably because it is so well-known already) and her verdict on him – “an imperfect novelist, but a highly educated man” – is still the most charitable one.

It is a pity, therefore, that no one so far has thought it worthwhile to reprint *Born in Exile*, the one novel where, in tracing the education and progress of an English intellectual of humble birth, Gissing gives his most revealing self-portrait. Mr. Jacob Korg’s interesting essay on this novel is the outstanding academic contribution to the *Collected Articles*. He sees its hero Godwin Peak as a kind of English Bazarov, a nihilist whose monstrous deception of the Warricombes is (he says) due to “uncompromising intellectual honesty.” The argument is that as truth is unknowable any lie will do to gain one’s ends. But this won’t quite do, will it? What Peak suffers is what Gissing suffered, a failure of nerve.

The countrified clean-living English middle-class world of the Warricombes suddenly seems to him, embodied in their daughter Sidwell and their kindly scholarly papa, to be the supreme value, greater than any mere intellectual value or social protest. The truth seems to be that if we are really going to understand Gissing we had better get him off the European Dostoevsky-Schopenhauer axis altogether and put him on the Home Counties Dickens-E. M. Forster axis. Apart from his Hellenism, his values were a strange inverted English patriotism

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and a profound nostalgia for the lost liberal England of his father Thomas Waller Gissing. His heroes look back on the one hand to Copperfield and forward on the other to Leonard Bast. If only he had had a touch of Dickens’s theatrical fire or Forster’s musical sense of structure, his deeply interesting novels might be more widely read today.

2

Letter from Dachine Rainer, 57 Eaton Terrace, London. S.W. 1, and reply, *TLS*, July 4th, 1968:

Sir, – I do not feel that one can reasonably complain that an author’s life imitates his art (your review on Gissing, June 27); for there is no greater evidence of devotion to one’s ideas and craft. However, your reviewer is wrong : Gissing formed a “disastrous” alliance with a woman long before *Grub Street* or any other work was published. He merely repeated the pattern later. Gissing wasn’t kidding around when he set about to ruin his life. But this can hardly give publishers and critics adequate cause to assist him by keeping his books out of print

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or by writing patronizingly and ignorantly about his work!

I find no evidence for a Gissing revival. There is, for a start, nothing to revive, since Gissing’s quality has never been acknowledged. The hundredth anniversary of Gissing’s first book, *Workers in the Dawn* (1880), occurs in twelve years. Of the more than two dozen books, published in very small editions during his lifetime and the several published posthumously, nearly all have been permitted to languish out of print for three-quarters of a century.

All of these works are compelling reading, even when they are so obviously hastily and amateurishly written (for the twenty guineas of so that awaited him); and several are masterpieces, awkward masterpieces apparently. When one considers *By the Ionian Sea* or *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (unmentioned here!) one could weep if one were not so angered by the persistently disdainful tone of reviewers (“most charitable...verdict on him...” or “if only he had had a touch of Dickens”... &c.). Really! Gissing was not a particularly “English” author, no more than Dreiser was an “American” one; they were both often poor writers, sloppy, unselective, hurried, who miraculously managed to write great novels! This is not easy to understand; and to a public which increasingly expects its art in recognizable and easily removed packaging, the genius of such writers is inconvenient.

Since H. G. Wells in 1897 wrote one of the earliest appreciations of George Gissing, several dozen articles and a few full-scale works about him have been published. Never mind the critical estimates and the scant flurries of republication. Surely what is required is a Collected Gissing. The neglect of George Gissing, one of the greatest writers of the nineteenth century, is a major scandal of the publishing world; it seems, for the time being, likely to remain so.

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***Our reviewer writes: – I have no wish to cross swords with a critic who regards Gissing’s novels as “masterpieces,” especially one who then specifies his two non-fictional

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works in support of her arguments. On the one point of fact in Miss Rainer’s letter, however, I am not wrong. *New Grub Street* anticipates with uncanny accuracy the course of Gissing’s marriage to Edith Underwood, it is quite unlike the course of his marriage to Marianne “Nell” Harrison (to which Miss Rainer so knowingly refers). The course of this marriage – to make my point twice over – was anticipated in Gissing’s first novel, *Workers in the Dawn*: although he was living with Nell when he wrote parts of it, the book foretold grimly what was going to happen before it happened. If, incidentally, Miss Rainer would acquaint herself with all the details of this marriage she may come to understand why I used the word “charitable” about her hero.

3.

Letter to *TLS* by Dachine Rainer, unpublished:

Sir, – Having observed (July 4, ’68) that George Gissing wrote several great books and many fascinating ones, nearly all out-of-print for approximately ¾ of a century, I admitted that this gave me no cause for rejoicing nor led me to believe that a Gissing revival was underway. All this was sensibly ignored by your reviewer; unavailable authors offer splendid opportunities for reviewers, who may determine the merit of a work with little fear of contradiction. It’s not nearly so good for the public.

It is a pity how often critics are journalists and how seldom scholars or artists. Having said that I’d like to see Gissing in print, that should have been enough. I’m now caught up in further corrections: Your reviewer is triumphant with dismay that I do not know that *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* is non-fiction. He is quite correct, for I do not. Has he not read the book? There is no Henry Ryecroft, no private papers. This work is an Arcadian fantasy. Gissing may resemble Ryecroft; after all, he invented the fiction. Flaubert said he was Emma Bovary, but we take the liberty of contradicting him: most of us do not believe he was, not entirely and we agree to call *Mme Bovary* a fiction.

I did not say Gissing’s novels are masterpieces. I said his “works,” even when amateurishly written, are “compelling” and “several” are masterpieces. What is one to do with a reviewer who does not know that works include non-fiction; and that several means a few?

To correct his dogged misapprehensions further: the first girl with whom Gissing took up when he was an undergraduate teenager, with *no publication* behind him, was a prostitute and alcoholic. His motives may have been splendid, but although some version of her appears in his work, I doubt she otherwise exercised a beneficent effect upon his career; nor did her successor. Gissing is not the only writer who depends on life, his own and others, for material. I do not know why this should surprise, alarm, dismay...your reviewer.

Why does your reviewer refer to Gissing as my “hero”? I scarcely know what that word means, and least of all when applied to an artist. One does what one must and why one worries

one's psyche into the production of art at all, more particularly in this century, is a mystery. But

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I do believe that artists, Gissing included, however hard their lots or meager their gifts, are gifted by fortune; their lives are more gratifying to themselves and sometimes to others than those of say factory workers, army officers or journalists.

4.

Letter from Pierre Coustillas, 58 Boulevard Pasteur, 94 Fresnes, France, *TLS*, July 25th 1968:

Sir, – On coming back from the southern hemisphere I find your review (June 27), partly prompted by my *Collected Articles on George Gissing*, and the ensuing letter from Miss Rainer (July 4). While I feel inclined to adopt some of Miss Rainer's views, I should like to suggest a third outlook on Gissing's value and reputation and correct some misapprehensions.

It is not true that his quality has never been recognized. I could cite fifty names of some eminence or distinction, past or present, to support my assertion. The balance of his fame may be heavily slanted towards depreciation by ignoramuses and "superior" critics, but I have come across few people who have actually *read* his books and made themselves acquainted with his life and who yet fail to recognize their absorbing value and interest. Gissing has had since the 1890s a host of perceptive and sympathetic interpreters –Walter Besant, W. L. Courtney, Justin McCarthy, William Robertson Nicoll, Edmund Gosse, Robert Shafer, all quoted at random from pre-1939 records. In spite of Miss Rainer's statement, there *is* a Gissing revival. The number of reprints and books and articles on the author since 1957, the centenary of his birth, testifies to it indisputably. Three volumes of letters have appeared, *New Grub Street*, *The Ryecroft Papers*, *The Odd Women*, *By the Ionian Sea*, and the two volumes of Dickens criticism are again available. Gissing has recently been translated in Italy, France, Sweden, even Korea, and a list of his books at present obtainable in Japan would cover a full page. Nevertheless, he is an all-too-obvious example of the prophet who is not honoured in his own country, and I sympathize with your reviewer's wish to ask for a reprint of *Born in Exile* and with Miss Rainer's clamour for a collected edition. If Gissing's achievement has never been properly acknowledged, the fault is not his but the publishers' and the public's.

To be "terrified" or "appalled" by a consideration of the relationship between Gissing's life and work amounts to assuming a pose or confessing intellectual fecklessness. One need not be afraid of his complex, partly bizarre, yet deeply moving personality. No good can result from looking prudishly or condescendingly upon his marital errors. Gissing was not "a nasty case of life imitating art all too slavishly." He imitated nothing. To suppose that he did is to misunderstand him altogether. He did, like most people, what he could not help doing. The idea of experimenting in matters conjugal was as remote from his mind as could be. As for his lack of nerve, it was counterbalanced by a less conspicuous but equally strong will-power. I cannot stint my admiration for a man who lived down such a scandal as the Manchester episode could be in Victorian days.

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His energy in some domains must have been as great as his weakness in others. To admit this seems to be elementary justice. Therefore, we have had quite enough of such phrases as "going into Gissing," "charitable ... verdicts" and the like. Before being "judged" in all fairness, he must be examined calmly. Nor do we need pity him or condescend to let his works stand on their own; they cannot disappoint those who look for what *is* in them rather than for what is not. To try to belittle his works because his "most distinguished admirers" see in him "a more

interesting reflection of their own concerns than is immediately apparent to the common reader” is self-defeating. That George Orwell appreciated him for his understanding of money and Middleton Murry for that of women and, I may add, Virginia Wolf for his sensitivity to the drama of consciousness merely proves that Gissing has many rewarding facets. Similarly, to refuse to place him on the “European Dostoevsky-Schopenhauer axis” and to connect him exclusively with Dickens and Forster (a view I do not at all quarrel with *per se*) is to simplify things unduly. It would seem that your reviewer has gone up into Yorkshire, investigated Gissing’s Wakefield background, searched for his father’s contributions to the local *Free Press*, but repined at the thought that Gissing might have a European aspect uncommon among the English novelists of his period. To appreciate him we must not only concentrate on London and Wakefield, but look towards the Continent, re-read the Russian novelists and follow him in Greece, Rome, Naples and by the Ionian Sea.

5.

On August 8th appeared a short note from Andrew Mylett of AMS Press, 4 Berkeley Street, London, W. 1 informing readers of this correspondence that his firm is reprinting eighteen out-of-print Gissing books.

6.

Letter from Dachine Rainer, *TLS*, August 22, 1968:

Sir, – Directly my comment “I find no evidence for a Gissing revival” appeared in the *TLS* (July 4), I received three corrective letters and as many brochures from publishers of and dealers in Gissing. Among these was one from the American office of the AMS Press, and because I dislike commerce as much as I like Gissing, may I write you again to correct the impression made by the AMS letter you publish (August 8)? Of the eighteen Gissing titles scheduled for reprinting, the prices are as follows: \$10 for *each* of seven titles; \$30 for *each* of another seven titles; \$12.50 for *each* of three titles; but for those unlucky *few* who might be seriously inconvenienced by such prices there is *one* title at \$8. (The other lists are from dealers and their prices are higher and their stock rarer than is usual.)

I can leave the size of the above editions open to speculation; but they will supply libraries, I’m assured. I doubt whether Gissing will get into many public libraries, where it would matter most, owing to ignorance and lack of funds. However, American University libraries who secure their funds out of such savoury activities as slum rentals have an easy-come easy-go attitude towards money and I daresay a copy will find its way into some of them. Since this catalogue presumes to suggest that Gissing would have been “cheered” to have his books

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thusly in print, may I contrarily assert that Gissing would not have cared for this sort of “patronage,” no, not even posthumously; and that none of us who care about having Gissing’s works available can regard this sort of thing as serious evidence of a Gissing revival.

Can’t some association of heroic publishers conspire to collectively risk the surreptitious sharing out of Gissing titles? Can we not reassure them by admitting that (1) Gissing always had quality and was always readable but was not often great; greatness makes publishers nervous; they associate it still with unsaleability; (2) Of the 45 million paperback titles now inflicted on the public, several are good but sell nevertheless; (3) Reassure them that if they run out of out-of-print Gissings and begin to squabble, we can supply them with other neglected authors and titles? In the meantime, of nearly three dozen Gissing titles *almost all* have been and are still out of print for approximately three-quarters of a century.

Recent Publications

Pierre Coustillas
and Jacob Korg

Allen, Trevor, "New Perspectives: Writer as Social Outcast," *Books and Bookmen*, June, 1968, pp.21-22

Armato, Philip, Gissing bibliography, *English Literature in Transition*, Vol. XI, No. 1, 1968, pp. 43-49 (see also p. 59).

Anonymous, Review of *Collected Articles on George Gissing*, *Brechin Advertiser*, July 18, 1968.

-----, "Going Into Gissing," *Times Literary Supplement*, June 27, 1968, p. 680. Review of *New Grub Street*, *The Odd Women*, *Collected Articles* and Keating's *New Grub Street*. Reprinted in this issue.

Badolato, Francesco, "II Vittoriano Solitario in Calabria" and "Gissingiana," *Lumen XX* (Milano), Appendix, pp. 1-32.

Chialant, Maria T., "The *Odd Women* di George Gissing e il movimento femminista," *Annali* (Istituto Orientale di Napoli), Sezione Germanica, 1967, pp. 155-187.

-----, Review of Oswald Davis's *George Gissing*, *Annali*, Sezione Germanica, 1967, pp. 349-59

Costa, F., Review of Coustillas' *Les Carnets d'Henry Ryecroft*. *Bulletin de l'Université de Toulouse*, November, 1967, p. 215.

Coustillas, Pierre, ed. *Collected Articles on George Gissing*, London (Frank Cass & Company), New York (Barnes and Noble), 1968.

-----, "Periodicals of the 1890's," in *Readers' Queries, Notes and Queries*, April 1968, pp. 144-45.

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Coustillas, Pierre, "Collecting George Gissing," *Book Collecting and Library Monthly*, Vol. 1, No. 1, May 1968, pp. 9-12.

Dennis, Nigel, "Gissing the Truthful," *Sunday Telegraph*, August 18, 1968. p. 8. (Review of *New Grub Street*, *The Odd Women* and *Collected Articles*.)

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Gissing, George, *New Grub Street*, introduction by Bernard Bergonzi, Penguin English Library, 1968.

-----, "The House of Cobwebs," reprinted in *The English Short Story in Transition. 1880-1920*, ed. Helmut Gerber.

Kamo, Mr., "Gissing and I," *Asahi Sinbun* (Tokyo) Evening Edition, September 16, 1967.

Keating, P. J., *George Gissing: New Grub Street*, Arnold's Studies in English Literature, Edward Arnold, London, 1968.

Korg, Jacob, Review of Coustillas's *Les Carnets d'Henry Ryecroft*, *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, September, 1967, pp. 206-7.

Mattheisen, Paul F. and Arthur C. Young, "Gissing, Gosse and the Civil List," *Victorian Newsletter*, Vol. 32, pp. 11-16, 1967.

Pitman, Robert, "Share a Leaky Umbrella with This Sad Victorian" (a review of *The Odd Women*, *Sunday Express*, May 19, 1968. p. 8.

Pritchett, V. S. "Gissing: Our Only Russian," *The New Statesman*, June 14, 1968. pp. 795-96. Review of *New Grub Street* and *Collected Articles*.

Woodcock, George, *The Crystal Spirit: A Study of George Orwell*, London: Jonathan Cape. Gissing references appear on pp. 229, 238-41, 248-49, 255, 272 and 282.

Young, Arthur C., "Henry Ryecroft and Professor A.W. Ward," *Notes and Queries*, May, 1968, pp. 186-87.

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Forthcoming Publications

An important article on Gissing, Morris and socialism by John Goode has been announced as soon to appear in *Victorian Studies*.

Enitharmon Press of London will reprint the three articles on socialism written by Gissing for the *Pall Mall Gazette* later this year.

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A Soviet View of George Gissing

P. F. Kropholler
Paris

The 1930 edition of the *Bolshaya Sovyetskaya Entsiklopedia* (Vol.17) contains the following article:

GISSING, George 1857-1903. English novelist. Within the framework of pessimistic naturalism G. reflected the general English disenchantment with bourgeois culture and democracy during the 1870s as well as his private misfortunes. G's characters are unclassed (literally de-classed), angry emigrants from the social nether world, failures, people who are crushed by capitalism and the social prejudices of 19th century England.

With its “semi-culture” of people’s homes (*Workers in the Dawn* 1880) this state of affairs awakens unfulfilled desires in poor people. It destroys the lives of women from the working class who are taken into higher spheres (*Thyrza* 1887), replacing culture by a tasteless substitute, creates genteel lower-middle-class misery and by poverty and excessive work it sullies body and soul (*Unclassed*, 1884, *The Nether World*, 1889, etc.). It creates a corrupt press which has a pernicious influence on writers (*New Grub Street* 1891, a novel on literary bohemianism), leads to imperialism and war, and brings a return to barbarism (*The Crown of Life*, 1899, *The Whirlpool*, 1897). He accurately and mordantly described this oppression from which he suffered. G. neither sees nor seeks a solution. An attempt at social reforms planned by a socialist who has suddenly become rich (*Demos* 1886) is so childish and pointless that in G’s opinion it is obviously doomed to failure. Hating both the upper and lower middle classes, yearning after true culture, G. is at the same time a stranger to the lower classes. As he sees no ray of hope he withdraws into the isolation of an outcast and soon gives up writing about the social class he hates. He turns towards the past (*By the Ionian Sea* 1901, a book of travel; *Veranilda*, 1904, a historical novel; *Ryecroft Papers* 1903, autobiographical notes). In all this G. is far more colourless than in the early novels which he wrote laboriously, persistently aiming at the “essential” word and form, particularly in the gloomy city settings. A great admirer of Dostoyevski, he carefully analyses complex psychological situations. The lack of action is especially striking in his short stories (*House of Cobwebs*, 1906). In his book on Dickens (1898) he links up Dickens’s work with the rise of the lower-middle-class. G. chiefly dwells on Dickens’s technique as a writer.

(The article adds that three books have been translated into Russian, viz. *Demos*, *Thyrza* and *A Life’s Morning*, all during the 1890s. The bibliography refers to Frank Swinnerton, and May Yates.)

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