

THE GISSING JOURNAL

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

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The Unclassed in *The Odd Women*

Michael Cronin
 University of Calabria

The Odd Women is one of Gissing’s most accomplished novels. It is both a document of its period and a convincing expression of Gissing’s highly individual view of life and the human condition; it is a tragic novel, but not one that refuses to offer a certain type of consolation, not in any banal formulation of hope, but through a peculiarly satisfying type of conclusion, it achieves moments of what we tend to call epiphany when we are talking about James Joyce.

The Odd Women has a close affinity with *New Grub Street* in that both works shed light on significant patterns of historical change and development, yet, more importantly, these novels are studies of personal relations and experiences in which Gissing follows, as he does in all his best work, people who are trying to find a satisfactory mode of living in an environment that is, at best, inhibiting to individual aspiration. Society in Gissing’s novels, much as Nature in those of Hardy, appears to assume the guise of a malevolent will or hostile fate, and individual reactions to fate and its determinants are coined in the language of Gissing’s fundamentally Schopenhauerian attitude to the human condition, yet, as I hope to demonstrate, Gissing’s success in this novel eludes easy philosophical categorisation.

In his analysis of the odd woman’s position, Gissing falls neither into the trap of polemicism nor into that of story-telling with a moral conclusion. He seeks instead to dramatise the experiences principally of two women, Monica Madden and Rhoda Nunn, in order to show

how they develop, “unclassed” individuals, in circumstances that thwart and condition their aspirations to self-realisation.

The condition of being “unclassed” in Gissing’s novels is common to almost all his principal characters but does not lend itself to easy definition. Gissing himself sought to define

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it in terms of what it is not rather than offering us a specific and possibly limiting definition. He chose the term as title for his second novel (1884) and in the revised edition of 1895 offered something of an explanation. What is remarkable about it is its flexibility. “Unclassed,” he insists, does not mean *déclassé*. He is not concerned with people who have merely fallen from a rung on some social ladder, but rather with people who are or feel themselves acutely anomalous in their given circumstances, which can often be defined in terms of class, economic condition and sex.

As is the case with other Gissing novels which appear to lend themselves attractively to analysis in the light of a given theme, such as, for example, the question of socialism in *Demos* or of the world of literary production in *New Grub Street*, one finds that *The Odd Women*, once analysed in the hope of finding documentary evidence of a debate on a given thematic question, begins to become unsatisfactory whether for its discrepancies of analytical sweep (this novel is not, for example, specifically interested in the condition of working class women and therefore can only remain unsatisfactory as a modern feminist analysis which is obliged to recognise its limited scope) or for an apparent tendency on Gissing’s part to resolve large questions according to requirements of plot and resolution within the framework of a novelistic device. This apparent mismatch between the novelist’s perceived intentions and his actual achievement has been noted by Jacob Korg and accounted for by Gissing’s inability to reconcile the respective demands of Art and reform in the execution of that complete work of art, the novel. In Korg’s opinion, Gissing struggled to reconcile his philosophical and artistic concerns with a satisfyingly developed technique of execution, leaving the reader in difficulty when he seeks to define the quality of these works.

It is certainly true that in his novels Gissing often employed thematic frameworks which quite naturally draw the critical eye to how he seeks to resolve questions which are of an ideological nature, and a certain logic would require Gissing to at least make his position clear on these questions, but he tends to elude us on this and to appear unsatisfying and inconsistent. It is necessary to bear in mind that he is interested in depicting the human condition from the point of view of the individual and for Gissing it is vital to his task that we are as aware as possible of the circumstances that characterise the conditions in which his people live and move. The thematic content, which can have ideological characteristics, therefore serves as a vehicle to present us with a set of circumstances which are precise and unmistakable but resolution is only conceivable for him in personal terms and we should be wary of a type of analysis which

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for Gissing would be detrimental to the highly individualistic enterprise of exposition which he undertakes.

Much ink has been spilled in an effort to decide whether Gissing was sympathetic to feminism given that there is much in his writing that lends itself to the suspicion that not only was he not feminist but could even have been a misogynist.

An important aspect of *The Odd Women* is explained by the author in a letter to Eduard Bertz, in which he describes his purpose in writing the novel:

It will present those people who, congenitally incapable of true education,

have yet been taught to consider themselves too good for manual, or any humble, work. As yet I have chiefly dealt with types expressing the struggle of natures endowed above their stations; now I turn to those who are below it. The story will be a study of vulgarism—the all but triumphant force of our time. Women will be the chief characters.¹

This targeting of “vulgarism” is certainly something that Gissing achieves in the novel, particularly in the treatment of the elder Madden sisters, yet to rely upon Gissing’s splenetic declaration here as an indication of what *The Odd Women* is about would be to do the novel an injustice. This is particularly so because the Madden sisters rapidly become subsidiary characters after the early chapters, giving way to the more compelling dramas involving Monica and Rhoda. It would be rather more exact to describe his next novel, *In the Year of Jubilee* (1894) as a “study of vulgarism” since it follows far more thoroughly the precepts of Gissing’s letter about *The Odd Women* than that novel itself does. It is conceivable that Gissing began the novel as he describes it to Bertz only to see it develop into something different and more far-reaching. While Gissing’s letter highlights the question of “vulgarism,” *The Odd Women* reveals that it is to its causes that we must look, not limiting ourselves to mere appreciation of its symptoms.

Gissing shows, in his descriptions of the elder Madden sisters at the beginning of the novel, a keen eye for the details of their unhappy lives and recounts at length the sad shifts to which they are constrained in order to survive while maintaining a surface of respectability. Wendy Lesser notes as one of the novel’s virtues the author’s ability to “convey the economic and social texture of daily life.”² He does this consistently well and his capacity to describe the numbing, quotidian awfulness of poverty and its deleterious consequences places in sharp

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perspective the dire predicament of many of the most unfortunate odd women. It is clear to us that in more favourable circumstances, both Alice and Virginia Madden could have achieved some form of self-realisation. They are not, in theory, social rejects. Virginia, for example, “might have become an erudite woman,” circumstances permitting, but instead has been reduced to the condition of a mentally enfeebled alcoholic.

Yet once we have been shown these unhappy women, they become subsidiary characters and the novel begins to focus on its two principal female protagonists, Monica Madden and Rhoda Nunn, whose fates have not yet been decided.

Gissing is anxious not to give the impression that Monica Madden is any less likely to become a victim than her sisters. When we first encounter her, she is working long hours in a drapery store in the Walworth Road and sleeps in a dormitory with her fellow workers, women whom she disdains as crude and vulgar, yet she runs a permanent risk of becoming like them. All of them are engaged in the bitter struggle of their kind, which is to live in the hope of one day being rescued by marriage, before they are worn out and condemned to spinsterhood or forced to earn their living on the streets. Monica is pursued by Mr. Bullivant, a lovesick clerk, whose persistence in his suit obliges her to confront him with the angry demand, “How would it be possible for you to support a wife?”, pinpointing the hard reality of their positions and the nature of the aspirations dictated by them. Monica is unromantically in search of a husband and finds that, in spite of the freedom of movement that London offers, she does not enjoy the social opportunities that might have been more readily open to her in provincial life:

At Weston she had kept tolerable health, but certainly her constitution was not strong, and the slavery of Walworth Road threatened her with premature decay. Her sisters counselled wisely. Coming to London was a mistake. She

would have had better chances at Weston, notwithstanding the extreme discretion with which she was obliged to conduct herself. (p. 34)³

This is her position when she meets Widdowson, and it is in the knowledge that an appointment with him awaits her that she goes to visit Rhoda Nunn, urged on by her sisters' not very clearly focused hope that Miss Nunn and Miss Barfoot will be able to help her. Perhaps if her first interview at Queen's Road had been with Mary Barfoot and not Rhoda, things might have turned out quite differently, for the maturer woman would have easily divined in Monica the

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diffident fear of failure that Rhoda's brisk and pitiless strength does nothing to assuage. Rhoda has yet to acquire the humility born of experience that makes Mary so sympathetic. In any event, the effect of Rhoda on Monica is tragically negative:

To put herself in Miss Nunn's hands might possibly result in a worse form of bondage than she suffered at the shop; she would never be able to please such a person, and failure, she imagined, would result in more or less contemptuous dismissal. (p. 40)

Even afterwards, when she accepts Mary's offer at least to come to the training school until she has regained her health, she does so reluctantly. Gissing very acutely shows how it behoves Monica to calculate carefully her best chance, while also demonstrating that she is in any event condemned to suffer because she is an unmarried woman. There is also the highly important consideration, made abundantly clear, that she wants a man. It is not Mary Barfoot's mission to rescue women from getting married, merely to see "that those who can't shall have a means of living with some satisfaction." Yet Monica thinks of the training school as an "old maids' factory," and Gissing notes that, just after her interview with Rhoda, she "could no longer be without a male companion." It is heavily and painfully ironic that the chapter in which Monica decides to accept Widdowson in marriage should be entitled "At Nature's Bidding" if we take into consideration the various factors which help and oblige Monica to justify her decision. In this respect, the debate between Rhoda and Mary about Bella Royston is not without relevance to Monica. Bella abandons her place at Mary's workrooms to become the mistress of a married man who subsequently abandons her. Mary puts the girl's appeal for help to Rhoda who, taking a hard line, thinks that the girl should be rejected or at best helped with a little money. The quite serious rift between Mary and Rhoda which follows is only resolved when news comes of Bella's suicide and Rhoda relents her severity. This is the beginning of a process of learning for Rhoda which continues as the novel progresses, particularly in her relationship with Everard Barfoot. It is a process that Mary Barfoot has already undergone and she enjoys a mature outlook which governs her philosophy with regard to the odd women. In the case of Bella, the appeal Mary makes to Rhoda is relevant also to the later experiences of Monica, who will also, in a sense, be rejected by Rhoda for having made a mistake. Mary makes an important distinction between her own idea of a code of conduct and that which is enforced

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beyond the doors of her little sanctuary dedicated to the training of young women:

But a mistake, however wretched, mustn't condemn a woman for life. That's the way of the world, and decidedly it mustn't be ours. (p. 62)

Mary, with deeper understanding, sees her task as that of creating for the odd women, the unclassed of her sex, the opportunity to challenge the tyrannous limitations imposed upon them by society and forge meaningful lives for themselves.

Rhoda's hardening of her heart with theory is of crucial importance to Gissing's task in this novel, which is aimed at subverting the pretensions of theorising which fails to take into account the intelligence of the heart. Through Rhoda's traumatic personal experience, Gissing makes us witness to a fascinating process of self-discovery which puts the collective experiences of the little world of characters in the novel in a new and richer perspective. Rhoda's drama offers a view of the question of the relationship between the sexes which is not limited to the debate about roles but which acknowledges vitally the intrinsic importance of the most visceral aspects of sex, passion, jealousy, individual will and the urge to domination.

In this respect, the story of the tragic Widdowson marriage, while having an unparalleled dramatic charge in its own right, serves as a compelling and stimulating form of sub text or plot to be considered in relation to the principal love story between Rhoda and Everard Barfoot. It is vital to our understanding of where Gissing wishes to arrive in his delineation of this latter relationship that we accept the strong notion of victimhood with regard to both sexes that Gissing conveys in the Monica-Widdowson story. The relationship is doomed from the start to deteriorate into a battle of wills, since neither Monica nor Widdowson can arrive at terms of truce. Gissing's important achievement, however, resides not simply in his powerful depiction of this suffocating and mistaken union, but in the expression of the personal development on the part of both characters of a conception of how relations could be between a man and a woman. Monica, through her rebellion and in her pathetic attempt to save herself from misery, helps Widdowson to arrive falteringly at a conception of something better even though the cruel, Hardy-esque twists in the plot smother any possibility of his expressing other than the most frantic forms of jealous neurosis which anchor him inexorably to his Ruskinian mould. Yet Monica is no major feminist reformer, in spite of the fact that much of what she says and thinks

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would pass as the advocacy of a changing of roles and the reorientation of the language of communication between the sexes. She marries to obtain salvation from an unpleasant situation and in her adulterous passion for Bevis continues to conceive of the male as a form of protector or saviour. In her acknowledgement of having been false to Widdowson and herself in marrying a man she does not love, she clings to a romantic notion of love similar to that so forcefully attacked by Rhoda when she talks of the love described by novelists. Her attempted elopement is almost satirically melodramatic and when she realises that Bevis has not been as desperately serious as she has, her disappointment is expressed in terms that limit the horizons of her theoretical emancipation:

Monica broke down. The unmanliness of his tone was so dreadful a disillusion. She had expected something so entirely different – swift, virile passion, eagerness to anticipate her desire of flight, a strength, a courage to which she could abandon herself, body and soul. She broke down utterly and wept with her hands on her face. (p. 264)

It is very important to acknowledge that Gissing, in his management of the Monica-Widdowson story, succeeds not only in telling in forceful and convincing detail the story of this failed relationship but also in illustrating the flickerings of a nascent awareness in the unhappy partners of a juster conception of sexual relations, without falling into the trap of resolving the story in a manner that would compromise its realism. It follows inexorably its tragic course.

When we come to the Rhoda-Everard part of the novel, the notion of victimhood acquires

a more refined dimension that is essential to our understanding of the Gissing protagonist. It could seem that both Rhoda and Everard are easy characters to interpret in the sense that the former quite plainly proclaims herself a feminist crusader while the latter appears to occupy his place in the novel as a mouthpiece of information about marital situations and failures and as a provocative and playful suitor who is “not quite serious,” an elusive figure that the girls just can’t nail down. Yet, on closer analysis, both characters emerge as highly complex and driven by impulses that identify them easily as thought-provoking unclassed protagonists.

In the relationship between Rhoda and Everard the interplay of character is rather more complicated than in the case of Widdowson and Monica and the positions of the characters less rigidly defined, especially in the case of Everard. The depiction of Rhoda is cleverly done in the early stages of the relationship as we tend for the most part to see her through Everard’s eyes

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and we share in his attempts to evaluate her. To other characters in the novel, she is rather a daunting figure, dedicated to spinsterhood and scornful of women who fall into the traps laid by men. In the case of Bella Royston, she uses the occasion for a diatribe against the vulgarity of the emotion to which the girl had succumbed, and we are reminded of a similar outburst by Amy Reardon in *New Grub Street* when Rhoda attacks the modern novelist’s sentimentalisation of love. Yet as the novel progresses, Rhoda’s stridency will be tempered by experience and deep suffering, and an important part of Gissing’s purpose in the novel is to depict Rhoda’s chastening and her coming to a new maturity and sense of self-realisation through her love for Everard. It is Everard’s task to draw her out and it is through him that Gissing also delineates a whole range of views and speculations on the question of love and marriage. Everard regales Rhoda and Mary with stories of his unhappily married acquaintances, tells them of Poppleton, whose wife is so stupid that she can no more understand the nature of a pun than she can the binomial theorem and of Orchard, whose wife simply tyrannises over him. Everard’s own brother has been tormented literally to death by a frivolous society wife whom he had loved distractedly. It is Everard who notices the decline in Monica’s health after she gets married and who immediately recognises Widdowson’s jealousy and extreme possessiveness. Everard’s friend, Micklethwaite, is the only happily married man in the novel. After an engagement prolonged by poverty for seventeen years, he and his wife settle into domestic contentment in South Tottenham and Everard reflects upon the happy idyll after visiting the couple:

Well, that was one ideal of marriage. Not his ideal; but very beautiful amid the vulgarities and vileness of ordinary experience. It was the old fashion in its purest presentment; the consecrated form of domestic happiness, removed beyond reach of satire, only to be touched, if touched at all, with the very gentlest irony.

A life by no means for him. If he tried it, even with a woman so perfect, he would perish of ennui. For him marriage must not mean repose, inevitably tending to drowsiness; but the mutual incitement of vigorous minds. (p. 201)

It is interesting that Gissing should, through Everard, offer such a variety of examples of marital unhappiness and tragedy along with this example of contentment, albeit one achieved at the cost of the couple’s youth, and then cap it with Everard’s personal ideal of marriage as a vital relationship fuelled by adversarial conflict rather than the gentle Dickensian affection of the

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Micklethwaites. Wendy Lesser comments on this, drawing attention to an aspect of Gissing's treatment of sexual relationships that is seldom sufficiently noted and which places Gissing closer to novelists who come after him than to those who went before:

To leap in one paragraph from a tender appreciation of the Dickensian hearth to an argument for Lawrentian conflict is no mean feat – even if the prose does creak a bit in the process.⁴

It is conceivable that the use of Everard's repertoire of anecdotes acts as a fairly clumsy filler to facilitate this transition of ideas and to introduce the theme of adversarial conflict in love that is so fundamental in this novel. Unfailingly urbane, flirtatious and apparently never quite serious, Everard is intrigued by Rhoda, partly because she has the aura of a stern woman who is not to be approached or won. She therefore offers a challenge to his will in sexual terms. He feels that there would be something "piquant in making vigorous love to Miss Nunn, just to prove her sincerity." At first, he considers his interest in Rhoda to be purely intellectual and casually imagines that it would be yet more amusing if that interest became tinged with passion also. He commences his attack by baiting her playfully, thinking that "a contest between his will and hers would be an amusement decidedly to his taste." Here, therefore, Gissing's presentation of the issue of will in sexual relations offers a different approach from that adopted in the case of Edwin and Amy Reardon in *New Grub Street*, since in this case we are able to watch the relationship develop from the outset. In the earlier novel, the Reardon relationship is presented as it is already entering its final phase of dissolution and we are given a retrospective and reported view of its origins, drawing attention to Reardon's hopeless idealism in love and Amy hard-headed social ambition. The issue of will and domination in *New Grub Street* emerges in the powerfully written chapters which chart the last moments of the marriage, as the couple come to realise that they are hopelessly mismatched and that their union has been founded on a mutual misconception. In the struggle for domination, Reardon fails to exert any authoritative influence over Amy and is forced to accept separation and a return to his original, socially ignominious position. In *The Odd Women*, on the other hand, we see a relationship that has its very origin in a conflict of wills and the manifest desire to control and dominate. Each seeks the subjugation of the other for personal satisfaction.

If Everard appears to be a flexible and easy-going fellow, wavering between sincerity towards Rhoda and simple playfulness, Rhoda herself comes across as more serious and self-

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questioning. As a quite militant feminist reformer, she suffers from a feeling of being out on a limb, dislocated from the common experiences of womanhood, one of the "unclassed." She does not share, she thinks, the sense of fulfillment that comes to other women through love, marriage and child-bearing and it is unavoidable that she must feel the need of some form of sanction for the position she has taken in remaining so vigorously aloof from the traditional roles of women. Bella Royston's suicide does, therefore, affect her, although she attempts at first to bully her way through the crisis in a doctrinaire manner. Accordingly, Mary Barfoot accuses her justly of hardening her heart with theory, suggesting that Rhoda might have felt differently had Bella been her sister. The implication is that Rhoda's militant attitudes need tempering, humanising, yet at this stage she is only capable of responding with the idealistic retort, "It isn't personal feeling that directs a great movement in civilisation." Yet, as if in doubt of the validity of her position, she is more muted in her response to Everard's suggestion that Mary's grief over the death is natural and that she herself would rather not have had the girl die.

Everard is Rhoda's weak link. She softens towards him because of her secret feeling that it would be a loss never to have known the "common triumph of her sex" over a man, to have a

man declare his love to her:

To reject a lover in so many respects desirable, whom so many women might envy her, would fortify her self-esteem, and enable her to go forward in the chosen path with firmer tread. (p. 168)

The pertinent point here is that Rhoda sees love almost entirely in terms of personal conquest and the satisfaction of her will. In fact, both she and Everard, to begin with, regard love purely as gratification of will. After Everard declares his love to her, Gissing notes with some irony that "Miss Nunn was altogether a more amiable person." Her conquest of Everard gives her the approving sanction for what she is, a woman who chooses her vocation as feminist reformer and does not have it thrust upon her because she could never have claimed a man.

Yet in the climactic chapter, "The Fate of the Ideal," when the two spend the day together by the sea, away from the constraining influences of the city, Everard decides to test Rhoda. The question of free union has already been mooted between them as the potentially ideal form of relationship between a man and a woman, so he decides to propose such a union to her to see if

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she answers to his ideal of womanhood, resolving that if she accepts, he will then reward her by going through the conventional form of marriage. At this point Gissing weaves a complicating thread into the fabric of their involvement with each other, that of jealousy. No sexual relationship, apart from that of the Micklethwaites perhaps, is free of this emotion which, especially in the Monica-Widdowson relationship, becomes the dominant motive in all their encounters. In like manner the idealistic and theoretical possibilities in the relationship between Everard and Rhoda are thwarted by the intrusion of jealousy, through Rhoda's suspicion that Everard has been romantically involved with Monica. Rhoda is also confused at the thought of what effect a free union would have on her work and how this in turn would affect Everard. Because she is apparently confused and weakened by this dilemma, Everard decides to offer her legal marriage and when she accepts this offer, he is immediately disappointed. She in turn reflects that she has let him down and, ironically, tells herself that if she had first consented to a free union, she would probably have been able to bring him round eventually to the conventional form of marriage, once she had satisfied him with a demonstration of her strength and courage in confronting such a socially audacious gesture. This mutual feeling of dissatisfaction is only aggravated when Rhoda receives Mary's letter relating Everard's supposed indiscretions with Monica. Everard asserts his innocence and exploits his position of indignant and innocent accused to avoid coming to terms with Rhoda and escapes abroad. Everard is guilty here of considerable bad faith and after this point the novel follows Rhoda's development in suffering towards a new form of self-awareness which is crowned by her reconciliation with Monica. Everard becomes increasingly marginal and will make a rather abrupt exit from the novel with his announcement to Micklethwaite that he is to marry Agnes Brissenden. Rhoda's pain gives her a new maturity and a fuller understanding of her role, and this is brought home strikingly in her touching final encounter with Monica. To begin with, Rhoda is cold towards Monica, regarding her as trivial, but the latter's simple humanity and warmth, and her evident great suffering soften her. Monica's generosity of spirit and honesty elevate her to a genuinely tragic stature, and a new response is awakened in Rhoda as she tries to give counsel and comfort to her unhappy visitor:

Herself strongly moved, Rhoda had never spoken so impressively, had never given counsel of such earnest significance. She felt her power in quite a new way, without touch of vanity, without posing or any trivial

self-consciousness. (p. 362)

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Consequently, when Barfoot visits her after his return to England, he finds that she has a new sense of their respective positions and that she is no longer interested in engaging in the sort of battle of wills to which he had grown used and which he had savoured. She now has a serenity and self-possession that is no longer vulnerable to his teasing approaches. Nevertheless, she suffers a great deal during this interview as she has sincerely loved Everard. She is now resolved, however, not to marry because she has reached a stage at which she can interpret his calculations. Everard's games playing, contrasted with her matured sense of herself, seems puny and futile. When she tells him "let me be what I now am," she is making a declaration consonant with a sense of self that is inviolable and which marks an irrevocable distance between the two. Her final accusation, "You never loved me with entire sincerity. And you will never love any woman – even as well as you loved me" is the mark of her recognition that she has liberated herself from the self-conscious subjugation of self to the urges of will and personal egotisms to which Everard remains subject. In this sense Everard is forced to recognise that his way of approaching Rhoda is, to use an expression from Forster, a negation of the wish to "connect." It is something of which he is not capable. He is a victim of his own character, one which is highly complex and which is similar to other male protagonists' in the novels, such as Osmond Waymark in *The Unclassed* or Walter Egremont in *Thyrza*. In his youth he had turned rebelliously to Radicalism, although, as Mary Barfoot comments, he has never had any real sympathy for the working classes. He has dedicated his working life to the pursuit of a career to which he is temperamentally unfitted. He is also a social misfit and Mary gives the impression that he is lost or at least wandering:

He won't admit any ambition. He has no society. His friends are nearly all obscure people... (p. 97)

So in spite of his apparently easy-going urbanity and self-assurance, Barfoot is unclassed not in the sense that his aspirations are unrealised but rather that they have no definable form. He appears to revert to some form of his real self when we see him apparently discovering his ideal in the person of Agnes Brissenden, who, as a representative of the social set that she moves in, would appear to reflect the intellectual aristocracy of which Gissing speaks in his letters to Eduard Bertz. Here, Gissing describes this group in terms that bring to mind the Westlakes, whom he had earlier employed in *Demos* to represent a peculiar form of intellectual

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decency and detachment, separate from the world where the likes of Richard Mutimer move. Yet Gissing's picture of the Brissendens smacks somewhat of Bernard Kingcote's illusory idealisation of the world in which Isabel Clarendon so equivocally reigned. The account of them offered in *The Odd Women* is worth setting down in full, for a number of reasons:

These persons were out in declared revolt against the order of things, religious, social or ethical; that is to say, they did not think it worth while to identify themselves with any "movement"; they were content with the unopposed right of liberal criticism. They lived placidly; refraining from much that the larger world enjoined, but never aggressive. (pp. 366-67)

In the first place, the introduction at a late stage in the novel of such a group does not give us

the opportunity to examine it and to include it in an overall analysis of the work's thematic content. It sorts oddly with what has gone before and is simply not realised, either in terms of theory, or in terms of solid characters presented. The world of the Brissendens is reported, not seen. Gissing appears to be hinting at a sort of liberal, Ryecroftian detachment, a pleasant bourgeoisie removed from the world's strife, but its late introduction in this novel is discordant thematically and one could suspect that its function is to have somewhere to put Everard as the novel draws to a close. The effect is rather a strange one, especially since it appears necessary to soften Everard in order to make the world of the Brissendens acceptable to a character who has displayed a singular personality which it is hard to envisage being humbled by the gentle Agnes when the resolute Rhoda Nunn has failed. In a certain sense, it does confirm Gissing's general thesis that sexual relations inescapably involve an element of struggle in which one will must needs dominate and here we find Everard experiencing with Agnes a "genuine humility such as he had never known." It is conceivable that we are seeing a version in little, thrust rather awkwardly into this novel, of Godwin Peak's feeling for Sidwell Warricombe in *Born in Exile*. Perhaps more important, however, is that Gissing effects the removal of Barfoot to allow Rhoda to take centre stage as she endures her painful period of isolation, and this highlights the nobility of her decision to remain alone and continue her work with a new-found and sustaining sense of mission. Rhoda's experiences bring her to the point of development at which Mary Barfoot has already arrived. In her valuable and well-argued essay on this novel, Wendy Lesser rightly sees Gissing's treatment of sexual relations as looking forward to the complex psycho-sexual explorations of Lawrence rather than back to Gissing's Victorian predecessors:

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What makes Gissing's vision of sexuality so sophisticated – so much closer to Lawrence's, say, than to Dickens' – is that it encompasses the desire for power and possession. In Monica's case, this desire destroys the marriage because it overwhelms the puny sexual attachment between the two partners; but in the case of Rhoda Nunn, this will to power represents the cause as well as the fatal flaw of her only major love affair.⁵

This claim for the modernity of Gissing's approach to the depiction of sexual relations can also be extended to his treatment of human relations in general, and if the analysis of sexual attraction and conflict brings Lawrence to mind, it should also be recognised that Gissing is interested in a form of human communication that strives to liberate itself from the trammels of will, not simply in the detachment represented by a sketchily presented socio-intellectual elite, but also through an embracement of life, with a sense of mission, yet unburdened by the negativity of will and egotism that in this novel causes so much damage. In this sense *The Odd Women* is a novel which is very Forsterian. It is intriguing that Rhoda should declare at the end of the final chapter that she and her movement "flourish like the green bay tree," while Helen Schlegel closes *Howards End*, another novel that is so full of damage and pain and misunderstanding with "it'll be such a crop of hay as never!" Nothing expresses better Gissing's intent in *The Odd Women* to favour Rhoda and her committed dedication to live and act, than the final scene of the novel when she looks down at Monica's child, a future woman, whose eyes are dark and bright as her dead mother's were, and says "Poor little child." We are given to understand that the child could find herself in much less sympathetic hands.

¹Young, A. C., ed., *The Letters of George Gissing to Eduard Bertz, 1887-1903*, London, 1961, p.144.

²Lesser, Wendy, "Even-Handed Oddness: George Gissing's *The Odd Women*," *The Hudson Review*, XXVII, 2, Autumn, 1984, pp. 209-20 (p.217).

³Page number references for quotations from *The Odd Women* in the running text of this essay refer to the 1983 Penguin edition of the novel with an introduction by Elaine Showalter.

⁴Lesser, Wendy, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 212.

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An Uphill, Unrewarding Struggle:
The Letters of Algernon Gissing to James B. Pinker

Pierre Coustillas

No reader who is familiar with Gissing's life and works is likely to be unaware of the daunting difficulties that his brother Algernon experienced throughout his own writing career which, if we take as landmarks his publications in volume form, extended from 1888 with *Joy Cometh in the Morning* to 1924, when he published his thirtieth title, *The Footpath Way in Gloucestershire*. Many aspects of his domestic life and literary activities are commented upon in the *Collected Letters of George Gissing*, not only in the letters themselves, but also in the notes, some substantial portions of which are supplied by the diaries of Lucy Bruce, Catherine Gissing's aunt. The Algernon Gissings' struggle with poverty and other evils was a permanent one from their marriage onward; it was observed by Mrs. Gissing, Margaret and Ellen with affectionate tolerance, by Gissing himself with increasing apprehension, by Samuel and Lucy Bruce with patience – and occasional fits of anger –, but Algernon's vanity and indifference to the penalties he was inflicting upon his relatives and friends cost them all much suffering. Algernon was an adept in the art of borrowing (without hardly ever refunding). Hundreds of pounds were borrowed from these three sources and others – Catherine's sisters, H. G. Wells, Clara Collet and James B. Pinker were among the victims. Not improbably, Miss Collet was to observe after George's death, Daniel Otway, Piers's unscrupulous brother in *The Crown of Life*, was partly drawn after Algernon.

The rolling fire of criticism aimed at Algernon has always been fed by missiles readily available in the correspondence and private papers of his relatives and acquaintances, but little enough account has been taken of the letters sent and received by Algernon himself. Some day his correspondence with James B. Pinker about George's posthumous affairs will have to be published – it will show for instance that if no collected edition of George Gissing's works was published between the wars, the onus must be put onto Algernon, as Pinker himself not unfairly suggested – but meanwhile he can, indeed should be judged from what is known of his correspondence about his own works. Part of it, originally to be found in the Carl H. Pforzheimer Library, has been acquired by the Beinecke Library, at Yale University. Although it extends from 6 October 1899 to December 1908, the main portion concerns Algernon's struggles before George's death and is therefore of interest to students of the latter's last few

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years, sometimes throwing useful light on the family correspondence to be published in Volumes 7 to 9 of the *Collected Letters*, sometimes supplying details that neither George nor "the Wakefield people" were likely to be apprised of. The letters show their writer at work and tell us much about his temperament and abilities.

At the time these thirty items of correspondence begin, Algernon had published ten three- or two-volume novels in as many years, and, save for the last, they all bore the Hurst & Blackett

imprint. After his switching over to Hutchinson with *The Scholar of Bygate* (1897), he had ceased for a while writing novels, trying his hand at short stories, possibly also, following his brother's and W. H. Hudson's suggestion, essays on country life that might suit provincial dailies and magazines, but as appears in the second of the present letters, he had now completed a new full-length story and very much wished to dispose of it promptly. His impatience betrays a curious inability to realize that even an efficient agent like Pinker could not reasonably be expected to place work more quickly than publishers' readers could read it.

Until July 1900 the letters apparently make up a continuous sequence. This first period corresponds to the early days of Algernon's relationship with Chatto & Windus and to Pinker's first fruitless attempt to find a publisher for a collection of short stories as well as some newspaper or journal likely to welcome the idea of printing a weekly column from Algernon's pen on rural subjects. Chatto & Windus published *A Secret of the North Sea* with remarkable promptness in January 1900 and *The Wealth of Mallerstang* in October 1901. Then for some reason—perhaps Pinker tried Methuen for *The Keys of the House* (1902) simply because he hoped to obtain a higher price from him than from Chatto & Windus – a period began, which was to last until the publication of *The Dreams of Simon Usher* in 1907, when Algernon seems to have dispensed with Pinker's assistance. He had succeeded in obtaining payment from Chatto & Windus for novels that were still unwritten (fifty guineas each) and struggled pathetically to keep his promise to a firm which was to publish six novels from his pen. What the letters to Pinker leave unsaid is revealed with embarrassing clarity by the file of correspondence from Chatto to Algernon – a long series of courteous yet impatient letters reminding the author of his promises, begging for more copy as the printers were waiting, refusing to contemplate the publication of further titles as long as those which had been paid for in advance were not written in full and published, for it appears that Algernon was busy with several novels simultaneously.

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Nothing of this is noticeable in the five letters to Pinker dated 1902, nor retrospectively in the three dated October 1907 and the last one, written in December 1908. These late letters are principally concerned with short stories, with the recurrent project about newspaper articles on country life or other subjects and, in the last messages, new novels, from *Second Selves* (1908), a title published by John Long, to the first of the seven volumes that were to be issued by F. V. White & Co. from 1909 to 1913, namely *The Unlit Lamp*.

Besides throwing some light on Algernon's largely futile efforts to make a living by his pen – one remembers Alwin Gissing's sad admission that, traumatized by the poverty imposed on the family by his father's vain artistic ambitions, he fought shy of books until the age of twenty-five – these letters help us to follow a few of Algernon's movements during the years 1899-1908. The correspondence held by other libraries helps one to reconstruct in some detail his weary wanderings after 1902. A map, old photographs and some illustrated books on the north of England are helpful to anyone bent on imagining Algernon and Catherine and their five children, the youngest (Margaret) a fifteen-month old baby in December of that year, first at Low Birker in December 1903, at Keswick in March 1904, at Willersey again in May 1904, then at Keswick once more in August 1904, at Glanton in October 1905, in Edinburgh in September 1908 and finally again at Glanton in December of the same year. On hearing of all those unprofitable and costly removals, Mrs. Gissing and her daughters must have sighed more than once. One wonders how literary work, even of a mediocre kind, could be compatible with such domestic instability. Meanwhile three relatives for whom Algernon and his family had been for years a cause of intense worry had ceased to ponder the remedy to such a situation – Lucy and Samuel Bruce, whose resources had been tapped repeatedly for two decades, had died in August 1903 and March 1905 respectively, and Gissing had been in his grave since December 1903, dead like Godwin Peak in exile.

Willersey, / Broadway, Worcestershire.
6 October 1899

Dear Sir,

My brother Mr. George Gissing thinks you may be able to help me in disposing of my work so I venture to address you on the subject.¹

Do you think you could sell me speedily the enclosed sheaf of short stories as a volume? As you will see, they have appeared serially in various quarters & I send them in the rough.² If

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you think them saleable you will of course dispose of them as you see best. Unfortunately I want what I can get immediately, within a fortnight if at all possible. May I trouble you on such terms?

I have not offered the volume to anyone as yet. I have chosen what I thought the most alluring title, but if you should think any of the others better will you kindly tell me.

Yours truly, / Algernon Gissing

¹No letter in which George made such a suggestion is available, but it must be realized that there is a sizeable gap in the correspondence between the two brothers at this stage. No letter from George to Algernon has been found for the period 24 January 1899-26 August 1901. Alfred Gissing is known to have sold letters to the family in batches of ten between the wars, and some are sure to emerge some day from oblivion.

²It is impossible to say exactly what stories Algernon was sending to Pinker. His first collection, *The Master of Pinsmead*, appeared under the imprint of John Long in 1906, characteristically about the same time as his brother's *The House of Cobwebs*. Of the twenty stories in *The Master of Pinsmead* the following are known to have been serialised before the date of the present letter: "Between Night and Day," *English Illustrated Magazine*, September 1896, pp. 503-09; "Lettice," *English Illustrated Magazine*, April 1897, pp. 69-75; "Love in Idleness," *Lady's Realm*, June 1897, pp. 159-66; "Lonesome Anne," *Illustrated London News*, 8 January 1898, pp. 45-47; "The Master of Pinsmead," *Illustrated London News*, 18 February 1898, pp. 215-17; "An Idea of the Rector's," *Adelaide Observer*, 7 May 1898, p. 35; "The Minister's Bureau," *The Queen*, 10 December 1898, pp. 1006-07, also published in the *Canterbury Times* (New Zealand), 3 May 1899, pp. 52-53; "Bridget's Dream," *Leeds Mercury Weekly Supplement*, 10 December 1898, p. 4, also published in the Christmas 1898 number of *Woman*, pp. 21-27, under the title "The Christmas Dream," and in the *Tasmanian Mail*, 24 and 31 December 1898, each time on p. 5; and "The Mystery of a Hoard," *Leeds Mercury Weekly Supplement*, 24 December 1898, p. 1. Most likely these nine stories were in the "sheaf" sent by Algernon. It may also have contained "The House o' the Dead," which was shortly to appear in the *Canterbury Times* on 20 December 1899, p. 44, probably months after publication in an English magazine. The serialization of five of the twenty stories in *The Master of Pinsmead* still has to be traced.

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Willersey, / Broadway, Worcestershire.
10 October 1899

Dear Sir,

Thank you very much for your letter. I have of course no expectations from this volume of stories & as I have no doubt you can dispose of it sooner than I could myself I shall be glad if

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you will kindly do what is possible. I earnestly hope something can be got for it before the end of this month. As to terms I hardly know what to say. I have to consider adequate terms what I can get. My novels have hitherto only brought me sums varying from 50£ to 100£ each, I having retained an interest in all the copyrights.¹ Most probably I have made a mistake in doing so. Can you judge from this what would be adequate for this volume of stories? I should be content with 25£ or upwards, if given speedily & if no more is to be had. If even this is not to be got for the copyright I will leave it with you entirely, knowing of course that you will only negotiate with reputable publishers. For some years Messrs. Hurst & Blackett published my novels; my last one was brought out by Messrs. Hutchinson & Co. on royalty terms. I don't know that I have quarrelled with anybody.

Perhaps I had better mention that I am just concluding a novel,² which if agreeable to you I will send in a week or two, so that it may be as well not to approach anyone with this volume of stories that you think would be more likely for the novel.

Yours faithfully/ Algernon Gissing

¹It is doubtful whether he had made £100 from any of his novels. Hurst & Blackett never gave him as much. He received £16 for *Joy Cometh in the Morning* and £25 for *Both of this Parish*. No evidence is available that for any of the other seven titles published by Hurst & Blackett more than £50 was ever paid. As for *A Scholar of Bygate* (1897), his only multi-volume novel to have been reprinted in one volume, he mentions later that it brought him "under £58."

²*A Secret of the North Sea*, published by Chatto & Windus in January 1900.

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Willersey, / Broadway, Worcestershire.
18 October 1899

Dear Sir,

Most hearty thanks for your promptitude. My novel is just finished, but as it has been done under vile conditions I am in despair about it. I send two thirds of it, the last portion is being typed which you shall have in a day or two. I tried Mr. Fisher Unwin with it some weeks ago, but as he would only agree to a 15 p.c. royalty with nothing down on a/c I declined his offer.¹ With this exception the field is open.

As to the sales of my books I have nothing good to report. My reputation seems to increase at the cost of whatever literary income I ever had. My last book, "The Scholar of

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Bygate," is the only one I have the means of judging, & although I haven't the exact number, only a few hundred can have been sold as (including 30£ which I received on a/c of a 10 p.c. royalty) I have had under 58£ from the book. It received infinitely better notice than any former book & I have had less from it than from any.² But I suppose it was the revolution in the 3 vol. issue that hit me. In view of my brother's position & the entirely different nature of my stories I have often wondered whether I ought not to have adopted anonymity.³ I forward a copy of my last book for you to glance at, which you can return at leisure, but I suppose it will be of no possible help in disposing of the present one.

I wish to heaven I could get any kind of weekly journalistic column in addition to this imaginative work. I have made a specialty of the country & rural affairs, & ought I should think to be able to dispose of something on such topics. But it is hardly reasonable to assail you with this fresh topic just now. I suppose my simplest way would be to write a sample of the kind of

thing I mean & then invoke your opinion upon it. If I could but obtain any modest remuneration in such a way it would enable me to carry my capacity in fiction to the end of which I have as yet but dimly given the promise.

Again with hearty thanks for your activity in such a small affair,
Yours very truly,/ Algernon Gissing

¹He may have tried T. Fisher Unwin because he knew that George had received £150 for all the rights on *Sleeping Fires*.

²The sale of the three-volume edition cannot have exceeded 400 copies. "Less from it than from any" is a statement contradicted by all the information available about his previous novels. Of the favourable critical reception of *The Scholar of Bygate* some idea may be formed from the excerpts from reviews printed on pp. i-ii of the second edition. Here are some echoes: "If 'The Scholar of Bygate' does not command success, it does more – it deserves it" (*Pall Mall Gazette*); "A really first-rate novel like Mr. Algernon Gissing's 'Scholar of Bygate' comes like a boon and a blessing" (*Academy*); "'The Scholar of Bygate' is certainly the best novel I have read for a long time" (*Vanity Fair*); "Altogether a strong, vivid, and fascinating tale" (*Birmingham Daily Post*); "It is a thoughtful and capable piece of work" (*Globe*).

³Doubtless the fall of the three-decker affected him negatively, since his books had been read so far through the circulating libraries. Very few readers could contemplate the steep published price (31s.6d) of three-volume novels. His professed regret that he did not adopt anonymity or rather pseudonymity could be disproved with arguments borrowed from George's letters or supplied by examples of the practices of Hurst & Blackett. Had George read this statement of his brother's, he would have smiled wryly.

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Willersey, / Broadway, Worcerstershire.
24 October 1899

Dear Sir,

I gave instructions for the last part of my book to be addressed directly to you, so I hope you have got it by now. Is there a possibility of our getting anything by the end of this week? Mr. Unwin made no objection to giving me his proposal within a few days.¹

Yours faithfully,/ Algernon Gissing

¹Since he says in his previous letter that he has been in touch with Unwin about his novel, this new reference to the publisher may indicate that he had been sent the collection of short stories, but nothing came of this second venture. However, it is more likely that Pinker thought it expedient to invite Unwin to reconsider his offer now that Algernon could submit the whole of *A Secret of the North Sea*.

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Willersey, / Broadway, Worcestershire.
26 October 1899

Dear Mr. Pinker,

Thank you for your letter. As there is now no likelihood of our making terms by the end of this month do not sacrifice either of the books to speed. I do not wish my importunity to stand in the way of whatever course of business you think best. I sent off the novel to you in an unquiet state after just writing the last page, so please excuse any hysterics my letter may have displayed.

On reflection I don't think the book is worthless. Despite the title the story is not a sensational one. The few notices from the press in the "Scholar of Bygate" may have given you an idea of my line of work.¹

I don't know anything of my sales abroad. As I get letters from Canada and Australia occasionally about my work, presumably I have appeared out there² in some form or other, but you will know best if anything is to be had by negotiations out there.

I will write about the articles I mentioned in a few days.

Yours truly, / Algernon Gissing

¹Probably the extracts from reviews printed in the second edition of *The Scholar of Bygate*, that is excerpts from the papers quoted above, as well as notices in the *Daily News*, the *Liverpool Post*, the *Standard* and the *Daily Telegraph*. The book was also reviewed in the *Daily*

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Chronicle, the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Athenaeum*, the *Lady* and the *Queen*.

²No colonial or American editions of his novels had been published, only some short stories in Australia and New Zealand, possibly also in Canada. The English editors who bought the copyright of short stories would readily turn to press agencies which in due course sold them to dailies and weeklies in the English-speaking world.

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Broadway Worc.
27 October 1899

To Bookishly London

Must accept this time¹ /Gissing

¹This meant that he accepted the offer of £55 made by Chatto & Windus for publishing *A Secret of the North Sea*.

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Willersey, / Broadway, Worcestershire.
28 October 1899

Dear Mr. Pinker,

You would get my telegram. It does seem a pity to sell everything for this sum, but with my past experience I feel it a matter of extreme doubt whether we should get much more. The speedy settlement more than repays a small additional sum got by other negotiations, for it enables me with a free mind to push on vigorously with another novel I am well advanced with and most likely get it done by Christmas with which we may try to do better. I am sincerely obliged to you for your prompt aid, & if you can possibly get me a trifle for the short story book I shall be still more so.

I forgot to mention to you that I always demand a minimum dozen copies for myself for presentation. Perhaps you will mention this.¹

Yours very truly, / Algernon Gissing

¹On 1 November, Chatto & Windus wrote to Pinker, acknowledging his return of the agreement signed by Algernon and enclosing a cheque for £55. It was duly noted that the author requested twelve copies instead of the usual six. The firm advised him on 16 January 1900 of their despatch on the next day (Chatto & Windus Archive).

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Willersey, / Broadway, Worcestershire.
31 October 1899

Dear Mr. Pinker,

I return the agreement signed. I see only half a dozen copies are inserted, but I have not altered it as I presume Chatto & Windus will have no objection to giving me a dozen. They have never been refused me by anyone before.

Yours truly, / Algernon Gissing

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Willersey, / Broadway, Worcestershire.
3 November 1899

Dear Mr. Pinker,

I am obliged by the receipt of your cheque for £49.10¹ & suppose no formal receipt is necessary.

I have no actual knowledge of my appearances in America, for I have had no negotiations on my own behalf with publishers there, nor have I seen any American edition of my work. I recollect getting a letter or two from the United States from readers with reference to my novels "Between Two Opinions," "At Society's Expense," & "The Scholar of Bygate," but I did not preserve them & whether read through an American or the English edition I can't say. I did not have a carbon copy of my novel made, but of course I have the MS. & if you think it at all likely that any American negotiations would repay the expenses (about 4£) I will have it re-copied. I suppose it would hardly look business-like to negotiate with the MS. nowadays.² I will do what you advise in the matter.

I enclose a couple of the articles I formerly referred to & shall be glad of your opinion upon them. I feel convinced that the idea of a purely rustic commentary from week to week upon prominent general & not only rural topics has some originality & is a good & workable one. You will be able to judge better than I as to whether I have hit upon a suitable mode of expressing it & one likely to recommend itself to newspaper editors. I have not set myself to write Magazine articles but a picturesque weekly column, say for one of the Illustrated weeklies, the Daily News weekly, or even one of the papers of a large provincial centre. Would it appeal to Mr. Shorter.³ I don't want to preach, but to give the silent countryman a voice, & on this account I thought the method of picturesque narrative & dialogue would be lighter than the pure article, by affording a little dramatic relief by way of direct character & local description. I think

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the enclosed samples will show you my object. I shall by way of background embrace a survey of the actual employments, grave & gay, of the fields & village life, keeping all this of course appropriate to the particular week of its publication, & also subordinate to the thoughts & needs of the rustics in general things. You will see that I do not aim at adding merely another to the overlong list of rural descriptions. It is the *Rustic View* I want to deal with & not simply *country objects*.

As to a general title for the column, would any of these do?

Rustic Comment.

The Rustic View.

From the countryside.
The Barn-door Club.
In Village Council.
Dialogues in the Lanes.
Round Barn & Byre
In Parish Bounds.

Although I begin round the stove in a barn I shall vary the scene from time to time, often conducting the conversation *in situ* so to speak, whilst the rustics are engaged in their daily employment – shearing, threshing, or the like. Topic & character will of course be varied each week, gradually presenting every conceivable member of the rural community.

The enclosed are about 2000 words. Ought they to be longer? If we could sell or get more for 3000 I could as easily make it that.

I have not had them copied until hearing your views which perhaps you will kindly give me as soon as possible.

Yours very truly, / Algernon Gissing

¹That is £55 less Pinker's ten per cent commission.

²From the mid-1890s it became common for authors to have their manuscripts typewritten. *Sleeping Fires* was the first of his brother's novels to be typed. The only Gissing typescript probably still in existence is that for his short story "Joseph," which was sold at auction by the American Art Association on 26 February 1929.

³Clement King Shorter (1857-1926), who had by then published at least three of his short stories in the *English Illustrated Magazine* and the *Illustrated London News*, but Shorter was very soon to resign his editorships and to be succeeded by Hannaford Bennett for the former magazine and by Bruce Ingram (1877-1963), one of the proprietor's sons, for the second.

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Willersey, / Broadway, Worcestershire.
10 November 1899

Dear Mr. Pinker,

I herewith return the proofs which appear to have come from your office. Please tell Chatto & Windus that I want them in duplicate, including this first sheet. What about the copy for America? If they are printing so speedily I suppose we shall have to do at once what we intend to do.¹

Yours faithfully, / Algernon Gissing

¹That is, send the manuscript to some prospective American publisher.

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Willersey, / Broadway, Worcestershire.
11 November 1899

Dear Mr. Pinker,

Thank you for your letter with your opinion of the two papers. It is what I wished for. As you don't actually condemn the idea I will remould the material & send you a couple of articles typed as soon as possible.

Herewith the MS. of "A Secret of the North Sea."

Yours faithfully, / Algernon Gissing

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Willersey, / Broadway, Worcestershire.
28 November 1899

Dear Mr. Pinker,

I have to-day sent off the last batch of proofs to Chatto & Windus, & I see they put a paragraph in the Chronicle last week as to the book being in the press, so I suppose they mean to issue it soon. Will there be any hope of making an American arrangement? Now of course I have the typewritten copy, but I suppose it would be of no use to you for any alternative negotiations. Did you tell C & W of my wishing for 12 copies or would you prefer me to write to them about it?

I have been ill for the last fortnight & so unable to get my rural articles remoulded yet. Is there any chance of your getting rid of the short story volume in the next week or two? I wish that or America could yield some additional sum shortly.

Yours faithfully, / Algernon Gissing

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Willersey.
1 December 1899

Dear Sir,

I send herewith both the typoscript & the proofs of "A Secret of the North Sea" in case they are of any use.

Yours faithfully, / Algernon Gissing

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Willersey, / Broadway, Worcestershire.
6 December 1899

Dear Mr. Pinker,

No doubt you are fully awake to the urgency of any possible American negotiations but perhaps I may as well mention that Chatto & Windus are to bring my book out in January.

Yours very truly, / Algernon Gissing

Don't trouble to answer this. I hope you are well again.

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Willersey, / Broadway, Worcs.
15 January 1900

Dear Mr. Pinker,

I fear your silence means that there is nothing to be had from America. Must I give up all hope of anything for the short stories, too?

I see that Chatto & Windus publish this week.

Yours faithfully, / Algernon Gissing

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Willersey, / Broadway, Worcs.

18 January 1900

Dear Mr. Pinker,

I got the impression that you did not think the articles worth much, so I put them aside to work solid at my new novel.¹ With this new hope I will do them immediately & send them on to you.

Yours very truly, / Algernon Gissing

¹*The Wealth of Mallerstang: An Upland Tale* (Chatto & Windus, 1901).

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Willersey, / Broadway, Worcestershire.
29 January 1900

Dear Mr. Pinker,

I have been ill ever since I wrote to you, so have only got one of the papers ready. This I send to save time & will let you have another as soon as I can. Perhaps this will do to introduce the idea to Mr. Bullen.¹ You of course understand that if he favours the idea but not my method I am quite open to discussion as to it. I consider the subject one of serious moment, & think that with the acres of print on the sporting & jocular side of country life there ought to be room for a column dealing with the serious side in a vivid & picturesque manner. But I suppose no editor is now to be approached from an ethical standpoint. I leave it with you. No doubt you mentioned to Mr. Bullen that my notion embraced incidentally a bright presentment of out-door aspects & occupations of the country as an appropriate setting to my weekly discussion. I shall have my conversations in every conceivable corner of our countryside where rustics are engaged.

If you think it best please get the paper copied & I will remit the cost on hearing what it is.

Yours very truly, / Algernon Gissing

If you had the copy of "The Scholar of Bygate" back from Chatto & Windus I should be glad to have it as it is my only one.

¹Probably not A. H. Bullen, Gissing's former publisher and friend, who is not known to have edited any periodical at this time.

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Willersey, / Broadway, Worcestershire.
20 February 1900

Dear Mr. Pinker,

I am only just recovering from a rather serious illness & shall have to give up all thought of the country articles at any rate until the summer. So will you please recall the article I sent you. For some time I shall require all my resources of strength to finish the new novel I have on hand. I am sorry to have given you this fruitless trouble but will return to the matter as soon as ever I am able.

Yours very truly, / Algernon Gissing

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Harbottle,¹ / Rothbury, Northumberland.

17 April 1900

Dear Mr. Pinker,

I am compelled again to ask if you think anything at all can be raised for the vol. of short stories of mine that you have. I deplore the necessity, but if at all possible I should be thankful. You will know best if it is worth troubling. Of course in any case you would not approach anyone to whom you would think of offering the new novel. Will you kindly address as above for the present.

Yours very truly, / Algernon Gissing

¹A Northumbrian village near the Scottish border where Algernon had stayed in 1889 and known to him since childhood. See *Collected Letters*, Volume II, p. 229.

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Harbottle, Rothbury.

3 May 1900

Dear Mr. Pinker,

Of course I should be very sorry to put you to a lot of trouble which you know must be fruitless, so let us put the short-story volume aside again until a more favourable time.

Yours sincerely, / Algernon Gissing

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Willersey, /Broadway, Worcestershire.

14 July 1900

Dear Mr. Pinker,

Thank you for your letter. I must certainly accept the offer of the National Press Agency. It is the same as Tillotsons & the Kendal Syndicate¹ have given me, so evidently no more is to be had at present. I will send you the MS as soon as done.

I am toiling away at the novel, but can't say when it will be done. I shall spare no effort to let you have it before the summer is done that we may if possible get some little benefit from the advertisement of the spring.

Yours sincerely, / Algernon Gissing

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¹These were three well-known agencies. The National Press Agency, established in 1873, had its headquarters at Whitefriars House, Carmelite Street, London, E.C. It claimed to supply everything required by daily and weekly papers. Among many other things it provided special columns by well-known contributors, and sold serials and short stories to newspapers. It had branch offices in New York and Sydney. The managers were John Reburn and Arthur Spurgeon. The Northern Newspaper Syndicate was another national and international agency, with Ernest E. Taylor as manager and its head office at Kendal, Cumberland. It supplied the London and provincial, colonial, and foreign press with articles, serial fiction and short stories. Bolton Tillotson's Newspaper Fiction Bureau had been established in 1871 for supplying the works of popular novelists to the newspaper press. The ordinary services included the supply of fiction and articles by popular writers. What the offer made to Algernon consisted in is unknown. It is doubtful whether it led to anything. He was still writing *The Wealth of Mallerstang*.

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Willersey,/Broadway, Worcestershire.
23 September 1902

Dear Mr. Pinker,

Do you think Messrs. Methuen would mind giving us their June account now on "The Keys of the House" instead of a few weeks later as agreed?¹ Of course it is extremely doubtful whether there will be anything beyond the advance, but if there should chance to be a few pounds it would help me on.

Will you excuse my also mentioning to you that I am doing all I can to obtain some definite work to supplement this literary struggle & as from an unwise seclusion very few personal channels are open to me may I ask if you can give me any sort of help or advice in my search. I simply don't mind what I do to get a first footing in practical life again & as I was a solicitor I ought to have some aptitude for active work. Of course I would rather get something of a more or less literary kind, but common prudence compels me to try for anything.²

Believe me / Sincerely Yours, / Algernon Gissing

¹Methuen had published *The Keys of the House* in March.

²This request came some three months after Ellen wrote confidentially to Wells, asking whether he could find some sort of employment for Algernon that could guarantee a regular income without checking his writing (letter of 15 June 1902 in the University of Illinois Library). Wells turned to Pinker, who thought that little enough could be done for a man whose novels were above the average, but second-rate. He deplored that he had to sell his works too quickly and had no time to look for publishers who could offer better terms than did Chatto &

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Windus and Methuen. Royal A. Gettmann, in his collection of Gissing-Wells correspondence, misunderstood Pinker and applied the remark to George's novels.

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Willersey.
30 September 1902

Dear Mr. Pinker,

Many thanks for your letter of the 24th & now for the Statement of A/c which I return. Whatever I hoped, this is what I expected.

Do you think there would be any chance with one of the Press Agencies, or with some of the large provincial Liberal papers directly, of a weekly series of articles under the heading "Victories of Peace"? Although we are very warlike just now, "peace hath her victories no less renowned than war,"¹ & it has occurred to me that at any rate Liberal editors might find acceptable a column to give each week a popular & picturesque account of a visit to some spot directly associated with some eminent life of peace or peaceful enterprise. There seems an endless demand for this kind of historical topography if graphically & popularly done. Do you think my notion is of any use? If so what could we ask for the serial right a week? If it were launched at all it ought to be possible to make some arrangement for concurrent issue in America, or at any rate to secure the copyright there. As far as material goes it would be easy enough to run such a series for a year at any rate, & if successful for an indefinite time. Would it be worth troubling you with a couple of papers as a sample? I suppose of not more than 2000 words.

Yours faithfully, / Algernon Gissing

¹From Milton, "To the Lord General Cromwell," May 1652. Algernon was trying to turn

the return of peace to literary account. The war in South Africa had ceased at the end of May 1902.

*

Willersey, / Broadway, Worcestershire.
15 October 1902

Dear Mr. Pinker,

I enclose the two sample papers I spoke of in my last letter. They strengthen me in my notion, & I am sure if we go the right way to work they will prove negotiable. I feel very

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strongly that the most likely method will be not just to offer the series to the Press Agencies, but to communicate ourselves directly with half a dozen of the best Liberal provincial papers. Though increasing trouble, this course would I am sure afford chances of better remuneration. In addition to this we must secure the copyright in the United States & Colonies. From the nature of the articles it is probable that we might get more from those quarters even than from home. But this no doubt would have to be done through the Press Agencies of the respective countries. Although I have had nothing from abroad I am quite sure that I might have done, for I get various communications from Canada, Cape Colony & the United States from entire strangers, & got from Boston two applications from a Press Cutting Agency to supply personal press notices in connection with my last book. So if I float these papers at all I don't mean to lose the outside copyright without an effort.

Since I don't meddle at all with politics there is no reason for confining our offers to the Liberal papers, but I thought the general title might naturally make readier appeal to them. The first paper is a little long on account of the necessary preliminary remarks, but if it was required I could easily cut it down to the 2000 words. I don't know what radius the chief papers demand, but I suppose we could certainly offer at Bristol, Birmingham, Liverpool, Leeds, Newcastle, Glasgow & Dundee. If you are willing to undertake the kind of negotiation I suggest, perhaps you will please have a few more copies made for concurrent use as I want to test the scheme as speedily as possible.

Yours very truly, / Algernon Gissing

*

Willersey,/Broadway, Worcestershire.
24 October 1902

Dear Mr. Pinker,

In face of your actual experience I must give up my idea of retail negotiation. But I entreat you to do all you can in every quarter. I am so glad you like the papers. With the slightest freedom of circumstances they would improve. I don't know how such agreements are worded, but if we succeed in our efforts to get one I should want at least a month's notice to terminate it as I should have to be working so far in advance. We must be free to make changes on our side. Pray do what you can with all possible expedition.

Yours sincerely, / Algernon Gissing

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*

Willersey, Broadway, Worcestershire.
28 November 1902

Dear Mr. Pinker,

I am very sorry too, & a bit surprised that nobody will have them. You have certainly given them a wide trial. Still, at my leisure I think I shall send the articles round to some of the best provincial weeklies. I wonder whether you would mind telling me what would be a not unreasonable sum to suggest for each article to an individual newspaper.

Yours Faithfully, / Algernon Gissing

*

Brandon, Glanton, Northumberland.
15 October 1907

Dear Mr. Pinker,

I enclose two short stories called *Merrill's Savings* & *The Additional Typist*.¹ Will you have them copied & kindly get what you can for them as soon as possible. Indeed I am compelled by a pressing difficulty to ask if you can possibly advance me £10 on them now. I trust you may feel justified in doing so, as my predicament is grave. The stories are I believe better than those I have done lately & I think some of the better paying quarters would look at them. The Editor of "The Smart Set"² asked me once to let him see some stories.

But I pray you to do your best. I am pressing on to complete a new novel which if you will, I do want you to test fully in open market.³ I am resolved not to part with one more without a thorough trial.

Faithfully yours, / Algernon Gissing

Let me have the MS. back as it helps me in proof correcting.

¹"The Additional Typist" was collected in *Love in the Byways* (F. V. White, 1910), but nothing is known of "Merrill's Savings," which has remained uncollected.

²In the *Literary Year Book* for 1902, this unillustrated monthly magazine selling at one shilling is listed as having its offices at 90-93 Fleet Street, E.C., but no editor's name is given.

³This cannot have been *The Unlit Lamp* (F. V. White, 1909). See the letter of 12 December 1908.

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Brandon, / Glanton, Northumberland.
18 October 1907

Dear Mr. Pinker,

Abundant thanks. I attach receipt on the other page. But on thinking over the stories I must get you to return me *The Additional Typist* for a day as the end is feeble owing to pressure & I can vastly improve its chances by addition.¹ You shall have it back at once. I am pressing on all sail with the novel.

Yours faithfully, / Algernon Gissing

¹This is an unsatisfactory short story which begins in a sprightly manner, develops into melodrama and ends in obscurity. The additional typist, Miss Tyrrell, is actually a mother who has deserted her tyrannical husband, Lord Ashmore, and visits her child secretly. In the story she leads a double life under a new identity, and is a subject of astonishment and meditation for Arthur Lampitt, her landlady's musical son, whose home has been bought up by the editor, Mr.

Dennick, whom she has come over to help from London. The concluding paragraph, coming after Lampitt's hearing about Miss Tyrrell's real identity from the young woman, now Lady Ashmore again, reads: "In time the musician recovered from the shock, and was enabled to enter upon his ambitions to some purpose" (p. 193).

Brandon.
18 October 1907

Received of Mr. J. B. Pinker the sum of Ten pounds on account of prospective sales for me.
£10 Algernon Gissing

*

Brandon, / Glanton, Northumberland.
23 October 1907

Dear Mr. Pinker,

I return *The Additional Typist* with substituted pages. Also corrected proofs of the story for Cassell's Magazine.¹

As to novel I may mention that out of necessity I gave in to John Long's repeated requests & scribbled one for him in the summer.² In case of its being announced I did not want you to think it the one I am working at now & which I trust is a very different thing. I want to make a desperate effort to gather up my resources before it is too late or I shall squander the reputation I have obtained.

Yours Faithfully, / Algernon Gissing

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¹"The Seat by the Door," *Cassell's Magazine*, July 1908, pp. 162-69. Collected in *Love in the Byways* (F. V. White, 1910).

²John Long, who had published Algernon's first collection of short stories, *The Master of Pinsmead*, in 1906, brought out one of his novels, *Second Selves*, in 1908.

*

66 Marchmont Road, /Edinburgh.
12 December 1908

Dear Mr. Pinker,

Thank you for your letter. This is in itself a good offer, but as we get no immediate help I presume you are satisfied that we should do no better by waiting to negotiate with the MS. itself. Yes, perhaps we should close with it, for the mere certainty of the contract will be a little stimulus in my harassed state.¹ It's the worst hole I have been in yet. By the by, we must make all effort to do something with America this time. I have just got a Press Clipping application from there, showing that even my last novel is pirated there.² I believe every one has been & yet I can't get even a penny. If I can command ten pounds at the time I shall protect the American rights to give us longer for negotiation, as I think this book is likely to suit them there. It is entitled "Lionel Lampitt."³ I shall work on as I am able & trust to have it completed before long.

Yours faithfully, / Algernon Gissing

¹If, as is very likely, *The Unlit Lamp* had already been contracted for, then his next novel to appear under the F. V. White imprint, *The Herdsman* (1910), is probably the story referred to here.

²No American publication of novels in volume form by Algernon Gissing is on record. If

his last novel was pirated at all in America, it must have been reprinted as a serial. But he is known to have been addicted to wishful thinking.

³No such title was to appear, but in *The Unlit Lamp*, one of the characters is called Lionel Lampitt. As early as May 1888, Algernon thought of using the name for the title of his next novel. See *Collected Letters*, Volume III, pp. 211-12.

[These letters of Algernon Gissing to James B. Pinker are published with the kind permission of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, and its curator, M. Vincent Giroud, to whom warm thanks are due.]

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Pathos and Patience:
“The Light on the Tower” and “The Schoolmaster’s Vision”

Masahiko Yahata
Beppu University Junior College

In the July, 1994 issue of the *Gissing Journal*, the editor observed how strange it was that Professor Yoshifumi Hirado and I should have been translating “The Light on the Tower” at about the same time, adding that we indeed had several predecessors. He also asked whether Japanese readers could tell other readers why this story especially appeals to the Eastern mind.¹

Frankly speaking, I mistakenly believed that I was the only Japanese to have published this story in translation. Therefore I was pleasantly surprised to learn that several other Japanese, including Professor Hirado, were as much impressed by it as I had been and translated it for publication. What attracted me to the story so much was Gissing’s ingenious skill in developing Mr. and Mrs. Fleetwood into such pitiful characters through a really tragic ending.

Robert Fleetwood had an unyielding ambition to succeed as a politician. After he was elected a Member of Parliament, he turned his back upon the wealthy young lady whose charms had attracted him, Miss Halley, and instead married a girl from a poor family. His father was so angry that he left most of his fortune, not to Robert, but to Thomas, Robert’s younger brother. And, ironically enough, Thomas married Miss Halley soon after the father’s death. Meanwhile, Robert’s career as a politician quickly came to an end, for he was miserably defeated in the next election. The defeat damaged him so severely that he began to lead a disastrous and decadent life.

Before long, an election for a seat in Parliament, vacated due to a certain member’s death, was held. His wife urged him to stand for it. But he was almost penniless at that time, for not only was he out of work but he had spent what little money he had on merrymaking. So he applied to his brother Thomas for financial help, but to no avail. Then his wife, Mary, who had always believed in Robert’s potential to become a great man, made up her mind to perform the humiliating task of asking Thomas’s wife for the money to finance her husband’s election campaign. When her wicked sister-in-law witnessed Mary’s humility in thus begging for funds, her malicious pride was so much satisfied that she scornfully promised Mary her financial assistance.

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Mary having missed her train home, she wired her husband to start his campaign immediately. Crazy with joy, Robert began drinking with his friends and got intoxicated. After

staggering back home that night, he tried to read his wife's telegram once again. He turned on the gas, and then groped for a match to light it, but he could not find one and fell asleep. The bedroom filled with gas and he was poisoned to death. If Mary had been in time for her train, her husband would have been rescued and might have become an MP again.

Now Gissing conducted his narrative cleverly. Instead of relating Robert's death directly, he was content to hint that Robert did not appear to announce his candidacy and to quote a newspaper comment which read, "He had all the makings of a great man."² Through these subtle hints, the story takes on a more tragic hue. Gissing's creative skill impressed me very much and I therefore resolved to introduce his piece to Japanese readers in translation.

In his book, *Life and Literature*, Professor Hirado remarks that he was struck by Gissing's "pathos" in "The Light on the Tower."³ Certainly both Robert and Mary are figures instinct with pathos, and it seems to me that Robert is seen at his most pathetic when he gazes sobbingly at the light on Westminster clock tower and recalls his past glory, but Mary might be considered even more pathetic than he. She is such a faithful wife that she never reproaches her husband for his boisterous ways with his disreputable friends, and even serves them dinner when Robert brings them home. Moreover, even when she sees him going downhill, she never doubts his capacity for becoming a great politician.

Pathos is what appeals to the Japanese mind, and I would like to explore the fact from a musical point of view. In Japan, there is a particular genre of songs known as "Enka." Its key note is pathos. These songs evoke pathetic aspects of human life; they tell heart-warming stories of poverty, of broken or forbidden love. They also show pitiful personages like Robert, who seeks to drown his sorrow in drink, or like Mary, who always believes in the man she loves.

Another factor which appeals to the Japanese mind in this story is the treatment of "patience." A patient wife like Mary has long been an ideal figure in Japanese patriarchal society. And patience, not only in women but also in men, has always been one of our virtues. In Japan, there is a saying, "Yamato-damashii," about the virtue of enduring hardships. This saying reflects the deep respect for patience in the Japanese national character. Japan's miraculous economic development after World War II is often attributed to this national characteristic, patience.

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Patience is even more vividly presented in "The Schoolmaster's Vision," another story published in translation by Professor Hirado. I must say frankly again that I have been so taken with this story that I am also thinking of its publication in Japanese.

Mr. Donne is completely bored with his everyday routine as a headmaster and teacher. One day, the mother of one of his pupils, Mrs. Argent, calls on him, and he is captivated by her beauty, youth and vigour. A few days later, pondering how attractive she is and how disgusting his teaching job, Mr. Donne, on a sudden impulse, runs away from his school. He spends the night at a country inn and has a strange dream in which he, Mrs. Argent and her son Willie appear. In the dream Mr. Donne and Mrs. Argent enjoy bicycling together, until they see Willie by the roadside calling out to his mother for help. Though Mr. Donne urges her to help her son, she ignores the school-master's advice and rides away. Stricken with terror, Mr. Donne awakes from his dream and hurries back to his school.

There he discovers that a similar event has actually just occurred. Mrs. Argent has left England for France to get married, and parted with her son. Shaking off his vision, Mr. Donne encourages Willie, saying that his mother's parting with him is a hardship that God devised for him that he might be able to grow up as a man.

Mr. Donne addresses another student who is leaving school as if he were speaking to himself:

Whatever the path in which Providence directs you, cultivate a reasonable contentment. There is a spirit abroad – a spirit of restlessness, of revolt. Be not misled by it. However dull, however wearisome your appointed task, discharge it thankfully; for, I assure you, there's nothing so wholesome for man as steady and fruitful labour. Do not become the plaything of a restive imagination; always consult your calm reason; always –⁴

These words, which emphasize the virtue of patience, really appeal to my mind and I wonder whether, all things considered, Gissing's greatness does not rest in his ability to write stories that appeal to both the Western and Eastern minds.

To conclude, I would like to give a brief account of Professor Hirado's *Life and Literature*. Its Japanese title is *Oriori no ki*, which, translated literally, means *Notes on Various Occasions*. The author is a professor of English literature at the Prefectural University of Kumamoto. He collected articles, essays and notes which he had written for publications such as the *Kumamoto Daily Newspaper*, his local paper, and the *Rising Generation*, a Japanese monthly magazine

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devoted to English literature. The volume is dedicated to the author's father, who turned ninety in 1994. "Various things will take place in man's life," he writes. "It would be impossible for one to live for ninety years without so many hardships."⁵ Much like his father, Professor Hirado has experienced various hardships such as domestic disputes on his coin-collecting, the deaths of respected colleagues or of his dear pet dogs, an operation, the traffic accident his son met with, and mental conflict concerning a reform project of his university.

Gissing might have described some of Professor Hirado's experiences in his novels, so fraught with pathos and patience they were.

¹P. 32.

²*A Victim of Circumstances and Other Stories* (London: Constable, 1927), p. 123.

³*Life and Literature* (Kumamoto: Kumamoto Daily Newspaper Centre for Information and Culture, 1994), p. 230.

⁴*A Victim of Circumstances and Other Stories*, p. 144.

⁵*Life and Literature*, p. 231.

Notes and News

Preparation of the last few volumes of the *Collected Letters of George Gissing* goes on steadily. Volume VII, which will cover the twenty-five months from December 1897 to the end of 1899, is virtually ready for the binders, but it will not be published until the autumn, and Volume VIII will be ready for the printers before the summer. It will show us Gissing in Paris, in Central France, in Suffolk, and in the South of France. A trip to Arcachon and the Basque country was made necessary for the identification of some places such as the Villa Souvenir and a great many persons whom Gissing and Gabrielle Fleury met at Ciboure and St. Jean-de-Luz, later at Ispoure and St. Jean-Pied-de-Port. All Gissing's doctors have now been identified, notably Dr. Festal. To judge from old postcards, the *Ville d'hiver* in Arcachon has not changed considerably since 1901-02. Anybody who would like to imagine correctly what Gissing's surroundings were like during the five months or so he stayed in the pension kept by Mlle Gatineau can now profitably turn to two splendidly illustrated books published last year by a local historian, Mme Eliane Keller. These twin books or rather albums are entitled *Arcachon:*

Villas et Personnalités, le Temps Retrouvé, (150 pp.) and *Arcachon: Métamorphoses* (108 pp.).

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The publishers are Editions Equinoxe, Mas du Sacré Coeur, 30320 Marguerittes (ISBN 2-908209-90-X and 2-908209-56-X; 165 and 135 francs respectively). Each volume contains several hundred illustrations, a vast majority of which date back to the turn of the century. One of the personalities mentioned is Samuel Radcliff, the Anglican parson who passed on to Gissing his copies of the *Spectator*. A photograph shows him playing golf.

Readings from *The Odd Women* were given on BBC Radio4 in "Woman's Hour" from 7 February to 6 March. The text, introduced by a leitmotif from Grieg, was abridged in twenty parts by Pat McLoughlin and read by Harriet Walter. The abridgment was cleverly done and the successive instalments easy to follow with a copy of the novel in hand. Perhaps the new impression of the Virago edition recently announced in the *TLS* listings is the result of an increased demand for the book.

For the second time in the last couple of months, the *Guardian* has given prominence to Gissing's name, in its "Commentary." This time it is Gissing/Ryecroft's "ardent fan-like love of books for their own sake, for the music of prose, for the autonomous mind contained within works" that is held up as a model to modern academics and reviewers (see "Recent Publications").

Dr. B. P. Postmus will give a talk on Gissing's working methods in the English Department at the University of Amsterdam. He will discuss the writer's collecting of notes and the uses he put them to, with special reference to the Scrapbook. Dr. Francesco Badolato is to give three lectures on Gissing at the University of Pescara in May. They will be devoted to Gissing positivist and pessimist, to the cultural role he played in his brothers' and sisters' lives, and to his absorbing interest in the classical world.

The new fashion for one-pound, ten-franc and 1,000 lire books may be short-lived. To the best of our knowledge, none of Gissing's novels has been reprinted in the original or in translation in such series. But Dr. Badolato has sent us an interesting little volume of 100 pages, Maugham's *Liza di Lambeth*, "traduzione riveduta e aggiornata di Gian Dàuli," with an introduction by Benedetta Bini, of the Università della Tuscia, in which like Moore, Morrison and Kipling, Gissing is duly mentioned.

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From 1 April the Gissing Centre in Wakefield will open again on Saturday afternoons from 2 to 4.30 p.m. The Centre has acquired a watercolour painting by Roland Gissing on permanent loan from the Wakefield Library. A display about Roland's life and work and possibly about Algernon will be arranged. Visitors will also be able to see the permanent displays about George and his family.

Recent Publications

Articles, reviews, etc.

- Boris Ford (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to the Arts in Britain*, Volume 7, "The Victorian Age," Cambridge University Press, 1989. Gissing appears on pp. 23-25, 33, 37, 99 and 337-38.
- Clotilde de Stasio, "The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft: Un 'ritrato di artista da vecchio,'" in *Il testo autobiografico nel novecento*, a cura di Reimar Klein e Rossana Bonadei, Milan: Edizioni Angelo Guerini, 1993, pp. 119-26.
- Andrew Shaughnessy, "A Pessimistic Positivist," *University Bookman*, Vol. 34, no. 4, [October] 1994, pp. 12-14. Review of Vol. 2 of the *Collected Letters*.
- Mark Storey, "Reviews," *Review of English Studies*, November 1994, pp. 569-97. Review of Vol. 2 of the *Collected Letters*.
- Stephen Coleman, "William Morris and 'Education Towards Revolution': 'Making Socialists' versus 'Putting them in their Place,'" *Journal of the William Morris Society*, Autumn 1994, pp. 49-58. Discusses *Demos* and *Thyrza* from an inadequate and fundamentally mistaken point of view.
- Masahiko Yahata, "Japanese translation of George Gissing's 'The Firebrand,'" *Bulletin of Beppu University Junior College*, no. 14, January 1995, pp. 77-84.
- Francesco Badolato, "Il viaggio al sud di George Gissing," *Nuovo Confronto*, Anno X, n. 1, January 1995, pp. 13-14.
- Martha S. Vogeler, "Book Reviews," *English Literature in Transition*, Vol. 38 (1995), no. 1, pp. 83-86. Review of Volume V of the *Collected Letters*.
- Edward Pearce, "Commentary: More Love, English Style," *Guardian* (London daily), 11 March 1995, p. 16.

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Information for Contributors

The Gissing Journal publishes essays and notes on Gissing and his circle. Contributions may deal with biographical, critical, bibliographical and topographical subjects. They should be addressed to the editor, Pierre Coustillas, 10 rue Gay-Lussac, 59110 La Madeleine, France.

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