

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*.

Volume XXXII, Number 4

October, 1996

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Gissing’s *Born in Exile* and Théodule-Armand Ribot’s
L’hérédité psychologique

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In Gissing’s *Born in Exile* (1892) – a tale of moral skepticism and class alienation – some half dozen passages of angst-filled analysis draw upon a now-discredited biological theory of Théodule-Armand Ribot’s *L’hérédité psychologique* (1873): a version of the notion that heredity can shape the behavior of classes and other collective groups.¹ Perhaps because of our own revulsion over the Nazis’ employment of such pseudobiology to excuse the genocide of death camps, critics of Gissing’s novel in this century’s second half have shied away from *Born in Exile*’s explicitly disturbing meditations on this unwelcome idea. Much fine commentary on this novel has appeared but has dealt with other issues: a religion-science conflict, socio-economic forces, and ideological contradictions, all of which help to explain the at-last-thwarted efforts of

the lower-middle-class atheist-hero, Godwin Peak, to win a wife from the gentry, the attractive Sidwell Warricombe, by joining the Anglican clergy as a means of becoming, in effect, an honorary gentleman. Jacob Korg, for example, has interpreted Gissing's story in the context of the skepticism generated by science about all ethical values, as reflected in the works of Gissing's fellow writers on the Continent: Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Bourget, and Jacobsen.² By contrast, John Goode, a Gramscian-Marxist critic, perceives a self-deceiving and unacknowledged "class war" in Peak's dishonest effort to slip through social barriers instead of challenging the structure of class itself, like a good revolutionary.³ Within a less doctrinaire yet still essentially socialist framework, John Sloan accuses Gissing's hero of futile individualism, "a naïve and regressive ideal of integrating with the old order," instead of achieving freedom by rejecting the world-view projected by a stratified society.⁴ All three approaches have their

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validity. Still, we might gain a further insight into *Born in Exile* by taking a close look at those remarkable key passages where the protagonist himself wrestles with his own bad conscience and invokes the idea of collective moral heredity.

The first shocking application of this principle occurs early in the novel, when Godwin Peak, at fifteen years old, blurts out an angry fantasy to his younger brother of deporting and exterminating the uneducated among the lower classes:

"I hate low, uneducated people! I hate them worse than the filthiest vermin!"...

"They ought to be swept off the face of the earth!... All the grown-up creatures, who can't speak proper English and don't know how to behave themselves, I'd transport them to the Falkland Islands... and let them die off as soon as possible. The children should be sent to school and purified, if possible; if not, they too should be got rid of."⁵

This imagined "Final Solution" of the lower-class "problem" (a "solution" that would most notably include Godwin's own despised Cockney uncle, Andrew) rests on the pseudobiological concept, spelled out later in the novel, that classes have a fixed assortment of traits transmitted by genetics – characteristics rather resistant in most human beings to education's transforming capacities. Later the older and more mature Godwin concedes that "the sight of" the "vileness" of the "very poorest" class "would only have moved me to unjust hatred," but he goes on to add of those like his uncle that "only a consuming fire could purify the places where they dwell" (*BIE*, 221: Pt. II, ch. 5). Yet in spite of the adult Peak's metaphor of genocidal fire, he remains an essentially nonviolent person who concentrates instead on separating and distinguishing himself from a class that he despises as genetically inferior.

In the fall of 1889 – just a year and three months before he started *Born in Exile* – Gissing had devoted much of three consecutive days to studying Théodule-Armand Ribot's *L'hérédité psychologique*.⁶ He did more than simply read it, for he wrote down French extracts along with his own summaries in English, all running to more than two printed pages in the 1962 publication of his *Commonplace Book*.⁷ These extracts are a good place to begin a discussion of the way that Peak sees his own moral problem within *Born in Exile*, for they clarify the terms of his inner debate:

Heredity transmits *acquired*, as well as so-called natural instincts.... In the original man, animal instinct must have largely survived. Gradually, reason

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abolished it. Now-a-days we still have instincts, for instance – that of

decency, & we see how by intense reasoning about such instinct, it can be practically destroyed..... The personal influence of education is trivial. “Elle n’est jamais absolue, et n’a d’action efficace que sur les natures moyennes.” It is often the merest varnish. Take the case of a naturally brutal fellow, brought up in a refined family; some occasion will cause him to revert to his barbarity.⁸

In terms of Gissing’s own novel, the theory of psychological inheritance sketched out in his notes suggests that children of lower- or lower-middle-class parents will act in certain ways through largely genetic factors, just as children of the gentry will act in different ways mainly because of their differing heredity. Yet the notes also hint at a possible escape from biological fatalism: the overcoming, through rational thought, of inherited tendencies – here specifically, the pushing aside of inherited “decency,” an example with ironic connections to Peak’s own dishonesty. Perhaps most importantly, the last four sentences extracted from Ribot indicate the difficulty for an average human being in changing inherited behavior – a change that usually, according to Ribot, takes many generations. Yet these four last sentences may further imply that above-average persons, such as Godwin Peak himself, can transcend genetically derived group traits and become, instead, exceptions to the rule of inherited behavior.

When one turns from Gissing’s extracts to Ribot’s full-length book, one can see still broader connections between *L’hérédité psychologique* and *Born in Exile*. The French psychologist links heredity and human behavior on a broad range of levels: individuals, families, and large collective groupings, including race and social class. Although he explicitly rejects as “very rash” Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau’s proto-Nazi racial exclusivism in *Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines* (1853-55) and instead argues that intermixing “black, yellow, and white races” may benefit rather than harm biological inheritance, Ribot still shares de Gobineau’s basic assumption – that races, like other groupings, inherit common behaviors, however much environment may modify these traits.⁹ When it comes to class genetics, Ribot favors manipulating heredity within a social class as a way of improving group moral behavior – a concept especially relevant to Gissing’s *Born in Exile*. As a historical example of how this might work, Ribot cites the “medieval” era’s beneficial interbreeding, in that “golden age of...aristocracy,” between distinguished upper-class families:

Often then when an alliance was about to be formed, there was required on both sides not only well-authenticated noble descent, but also vigour, valour,

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courage, loyalty, piety – in short all the chivalric virtues which it was desired to transmit to the children. It can hardly be doubted that if this selection were carried out methodically it would lead to good results for the improvement of the human race.¹⁰

Although the cautious Ribot does shy away from a simplistic determinism of human moral traits by heredity alone (he also considers environmental factors such as “education,” “climate,” “mode of life,” “manners, customs, religious ideas, institutions, and laws”),¹¹ he still sees heredity as the basic driving force. “An external agency,” he concludes, “is unequal to this task” of transforming ordinary people. “There remains in some natures, a substratum of unintelligent savagery which may be overlaid by civilization but never done away. Hereditary transmission alone could modify them.”¹²

Again and again, Ribot specifically insists that the mechanism of heredity transmits, not just physical traits, but also moral tendencies. In the span of many generations, he asks, “are

specific characteristics, physical or moral, transmitted by heredity?" Yes, he answers. "They are always transmitted." And he goes on to ask, "are purely individual characteristics hereditary?" Here, he gives a qualified yes: "facts have demonstrated that they are often so both in physicality "and morals."¹³ In his discussions of these "moral characteristics," Ribot includes a broad range of attributes: the state of being "well-disciplined," of having "gentle manners," of "easily adapting" oneself "to the complicated forms of civilization," and of having relative freedom from a "tendency to vice and to crime."¹⁴

Ribot sees such a strong link between inherited tendencies and virtuous behavior that he gives a whole chapter to the "Moral Consequences of Heredity."¹⁵ In order to explain how heredity can affect moral acts without a person's conscious awareness, he invokes his own theory of "unconscious" influence. He argues specifically that "unconscious" moral tendencies may override what we sense as "free will":

But if we hold, as we may, with truth, that besides the conscious life there is also an unconscious life whose influence is very great on our sentiments, our passions, our ideas, our activity in general, who can tell what part this unconscious agent may play in our determinations?¹⁶

A strong temptation exists for twentieth-century readers to interpret Théodule Ribot's "unconscious" anachronistically through the later ideas of Freud, Jung, or Lacan: as a caldron of psychosexual desires, a container of myths and images, or a reservoir of language games. But

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such readings miss the point. For Ribot, the hypothesis of the unconscious has one essential purpose: to explain the limitations of conscious free will in the making of moral choices. His unconscious is a hidden receptacle of good or bad inclinations. It contains a basic tendency towards good or bad behavior – one supposedly inherited over many generations from family, race, and class. If the Freudian, Jungian, or Lacanian unconscious is essentially amoral, Ribot's unconscious is in some persons ethical and in others unethical, depending upon specific hereditary factors.

The idea of moral heredity explicitly surfaces at a number of key places in *Born in Exile*. For instance, at one important moment after the atheistic Peak has suddenly, without any conscious intent, announced a plan of studying for the clergy – "his conscious self had had no part in all this comedy" (*BIE*, 146: Pt. II, ch. 4) – Peak blames this seemingly spontaneous deceit on his own bad heredity:

It was the ancestral vice in his blood, brought out by over-tempting circumstance. The long line of base-born predecessors, the grovelling hinds and mechanics of his genealogy, were responsible for this. Oh for a name wherewith honour was hereditary! (*BIE*, 147: Pt II, ch. 4)

Peak assumes that he would not have acted in this dishonest way if he had not inherited a dishonest strain from countless generations of lower-class ancestors. He anguishes over the idea that impulses of genetic origin within his own unconscious have left him especially prone to dishonorable behavior. He also feels quite certain that if he himself had been born into the gentry, an inherited inclination to do the right thing would have shielded him against such a low temptation.

Years before this crisis, Peak in his last year at college had bitterly criticized his younger brother, Oliver, for failing to resist an urge to sing minstrel songs and to associate with persons "of low intellectual order" (*BIE*, 49-50: Pt. I, ch. 3) – tendencies that Godwin connects with

supposedly inherited class traits of baseness:

“I mean to say that, if you are not careful, you won’t be the kind of man I should like to see you. Do you know what is meant by inherited tendencies? Scientific men are giving a great deal of attention to such things nowadays. Children don’t always take after their parents; very often they show a much stronger likeness to a grandfather, or an uncle, or even more distant relatives. Just think over this, and make up your mind to resist any danger of that sort.... For heaven’s sake, spend more of your time in a rational way, and learn to despise the things that shopkeepers admire. Read!

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Force yourself to stick hard at solid books for two or three hours every day. If you don’t, it’s all up with you.” (*BIE*, 51: Pt. I, ch. 3)

In this passage set in 1874, Peak’s allusion to men of science would include Ribot himself, whose *L’hérédité psychologique* appeared in the previous year. Clearly enough, the French psychologist’s hypothesis helps explain Peak’s outburst against his minstrel-singing brother. Not only does Godwin attribute Oliver’s boorish tastes and habits to the biological inheritance of low-born generations, but Godwin also argues, just as Ribot does, that free will and education – “stick hard at solid books” – sometimes can modify “bad” inherited traits. Yet eight years later, Peak’s own impressive educational achievements fail to keep him honest in a moment of supreme temptation.

Another character in *Born in Exile* besides Peak himself articulates a theory of inherited moral traits: Buckland Warricombe – the older brother of Sidwell, whom Peak hopes to marry. Having finally unmasked the hypocrisy of this atheistic church candidate, Buckland cites inherited lower-class dishonesty in an effort to extinguish any lingering love of Sidwell for Peak:

“He has somehow got the exterior of a gentleman; you could not believe that one who behaved so agreeably and talked so well was concealing an essentially base nature. But I must remind you that Peak belongs by origin to the lower classes, which is as much as to say that he lacks the sense of honour generally inherited by men of our world. A powerful intellect by no means implies a corresponding development of the moral sense.” (*BIE*, 311: Pt. V, ch. 3)

Even though Sidwell at this moment still remains in love with Peak, Gissing describes her explicitly as unable to dismiss out of hand Buckland’s assertion about her low-born suitor’s bad moral heredity. “Sidwell,” the narrator tells us, “could not close her ears against the argument” (*BIE*, 311: Pt. V, ch. 3). In short, the theory linking an inherited lack of honor with a plebeian family tree troubles first of all the protagonist himself, then his most determined enemy, and finally the woman who loves Godwin Peak – a striking consensus of worry about poor moral heredity in a person from the lower classes. This agreement among the characters strongly suggests that Gissing wishes us to take this theory seriously and not simply to dismiss it as one of the hero’s troubled aberrant notions.

Significantly, the most often used word within *Born in Exile* to describe dishonorable behavior – the adjective ignoble – refers in its original Latin root, *ignobilis*, specifically to class:

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“of low birth, of mean extraction.”¹⁷ Scattered throughout the length of *Born in Exile*, ignoble appears fourteen times in fourteen separate places.¹⁸ The most emphatic employment of the word occurs in Peak’s own thoughts just two paragraphs above the previously quoted passage (the one in which he blames his spontaneous masquerade on the “blood” of “base-born predecessors” – his “genealogy”):

For a long time he suffered the torments of this awakening. Shame buffeted him on the right cheek and the left; he looked about like one who slinks from merited chastisement. Oh thrice ignoble varlet! To pose with unctuous hypocrisy before people who had welcomed him under their roof, unquestioned, with all the grace and kindness of English hospitality! To lie shamelessly in the face of his old fellow-student, who had been so genuinely glad to meet him again! (*BIE*, 146: Pt. II, ch. 4)

Here Peak sees his biologically caused dishonesty as not just low but “thrice” or triply “ignoble,” and he condemns himself with the class-bound insult of varlet or servant. Yet he continues to debate within his own mind this harsh self-judgment and reverses himself only two chapters later with a sharply contrasting argument in his defense. The very fact of his guilty anguish now suggests to him that his character cannot be utterly base, for, on the contrary, “callousness in the first stages of an undertaking which demanded gross hypocrisy would” in itself “signify an ignoble nature.” He goes on to argue that he has overcome his inherited moral shame only by an act of “will” (*BIE*, 175: Pt. III, ch. 2). After all, he had a father with a “stubborn, ungainly integrity” – the first of the Peaks to overcome the moral taint of a lower-class genealogy through the study of “solid books” (*BIE*, 20-21: Pt. I, ch. 2). Toward the end of the novel, the hero’s mother suggests that “you are very like your father, Godwin.” “Yes,” he agrees, “I must be like him...” (*BIE*, 358: Pt. VI, ch. 3). His inheritance of conscience directly from his father – himself an exception in a lower-class line – seems hinted at by the title *Born in Exile*: *born* rather than acculturated into a social apartness. Yet Peak has reversed his earlier diagnosis for its diametric opposite: an inherited moral tendency from his father that Godwin himself has controlled and diverted by an act of free will. This logical twist allows him to assert that he is not innately “ignoble,” even though he has behaved in an “ignoble” way.

Peak’s ambiguous reversal of the argument from heredity later suggests to him a nihilistic turn that Professor Korg has interpreted cogently enough as scientific skepticism but which seems, more specifically, an audacious subversion of Théodule Ribot.¹⁹ A friend of the hero

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brings forth this response by asking if he has “never been troubled with a twinge of conscience” over his dishonest masquerade, and Peak gives an astonishing reply:

“With a thousand! I have been racked, martyred. What has that to do with it? Do you suppose I attach any final significance to those torments? Conscience is the same in my view as an inherited disease which may possibly break out on any most innocent physical indulgence.” (*BIE*, 361: Pt. VI, ch. 3)

Here he upends the conception of genetically transmitted morality and turns it on its head. An automatically inherited biological moral sense should be, Peak now argues, a mere epiphenomenon in rational moral choice. Inherited twinges of conscience may, indeed, torment a sensitive person such as Godwin Peak himself, but intelligent beings should stoically bear all

such incidental pangs and base their actions instead on reasonable criteria, just as one goes on trying to live in spite of inherited illness. Precisely because conscience is, as he sees it, genetically inherited, Peak at last finds it irrelevant for conscious moral choice – a genetic side effect in the rational pursuit of happiness.

Viewed superficially, the novel's domination by an outworn theory of class-inherited morals might seem to lessen the relevance of this text for late twentieth-century readers. In explaining collective group behavior, anthropologists, sociologists, and postmodern literary critics give everything now to culture and nothing to biology. But as Alain Finkielkraut has argued persuasively, our current social and literary theories have replaced, in effect, the concept of genetic determinism by a purely cultural one as the newest yet also oldest way of opposing the basic principle of Enlightenment thought: individual human autonomy. As Finkielkraut himself puts it, "contemporary fanatics of cultural identity confine individuals to their group of origin." And he makes the further point that "we perpetuate the cult of the collective soul, of which the discourse on" group "biological" inheritance "was a temporary and frenzied version, prolonging a cult that appeared with the idea of the Volkgeist" – first put forward by the German proto-Romantic philosopher Johann von Herder (1744-1803). "In replacing the biological argument with a cultural one," we are back "to square one" of enthroning the "collective soul" over individuals.²⁰

Whether Peak struggles to escape from a jail house of *L'hérédité psychologique* or a prison house of what we now would see as cultural forces makes no essential difference to his passionate rebellion against society's reducing of his own uniqueness to a mere expression of collective identity. In spite of Peak's moral transgression, his contempt for his own class, his

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overestimation of the virtues of the gentry, and his consequent refusal to play what we now would describe as "identity politics" for the redress of class wrongs,²¹ we soon find ourselves rooting for him to win Sidwell Warricombe. As we give ourselves over to the spirit of the book, we tend to disapprove of Marcella Moxey's jealous complicity in helping to unmask him (*BIE*, 277-81: Pt. IV, ch. 5), even though, morally speaking, she has much justification. And even though Buckland Warricombe, Sidwell's brother, makes a valid ethical point in revealing Peak's fraud, we nevertheless dislike this snobbish social policeman who hires a private detective and finally banishes from his gentry's privileged realm a man whom he regards as lower-class rubbish (*BIE*, 192-93: Pt. III, ch. 3; 304-13: Pt. V, ch. 3). Perhaps most importantly of all, Peak's own ironic and caustic self-criticism softens our tendency to judge him with severity. His complex individuality makes it seem especially unjust, in the end, for the hierarchical English to brand him forever as a class-tainted intruder into the gentry's pleasant realm. Within *Born in Exile*, Ribot's hypothesis of inherited class morality changes paradoxically into something quite opposite: an anguished, if sometimes self-lacerating, cry against the exalting of class and other collective groupings over the defiantly individual human heart.

[The writing of this article was facilitated by a Research Award from Purdue University Calumet.]

¹Jacob Korg first called attention to Gissing's interest in Ribot in *George Gissing's Commonplace Book: A Manuscript in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library* (New York: New York Public Library, 1962), pp. 59-62. In addition, Korg's *George Gissing: A Critical Biography* (University of Washington Press: Seattle, 1963), pp. 88-89, briefly noted the relevance of Ribot's ideas to Gissing's treatment of class but not specifically in *Born in Exile*. Théodule-Armand Ribot (1839-1916) was a French psychologist who published *L'hérédité psychologique* in 1873. In 1881 he published *Les Maladies de la mémoire*. Four years later he

received a teaching appointment in psychology at the Sorbonne. From 1889 to 1896 he held the chair of experimental and comparative psychology at the Collège de France.

²Jacob Korg, "The Spiritual Theme of George Gissing's *Born in Exile*," in *From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad*, ed. R. C. Rathburn and Martin Steinmann (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1959), pp. 131-41.

³John Goode, *George Gissing: Ideology and Fiction* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1978), pp. 59-70.

⁴John Sloan, *George Gissing: The Cultural Challenge* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), pp. 111-12.

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⁵George Gissing, *Born in Exile*, ed. David Grylls (London: J. M. Dent, 1993), pp. 29-30: Pt. I, ch. 2; hereafter cited in text and in footnotes as *BIE*, along with page, part, and chapter numbers.

⁶George Gissing, *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Lewisburg, Penn.: Bucknell University Press, 1978), p. 170: Oct. 30, Oct. 31, Nov. 1, 1889; hereafter cited in footnotes as *Diary*.

⁷*Commonplace Book*, pp. 59-62.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 59, 61, 62.

⁹Here and elsewhere, I am using the 1875 English translation of *L'hérédité psychologique*: Th[éodule-Armand] Ribot, *Heredity: A Psychological Study of Its Phenomena, Laws, Causes, and Consequences*, tr. anon. (New York: D. Appleton, 1875), pp. 294-96.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 293. Five years after writing *Born in Exile*, Gissing read ideas similar to Ribot's about a link between behavioral traits and heredity in Sir Francis Galton's *English Men of Science: Their Nature and Nurture* (1874) – the same Galton who coined the word eugenics (see *Diary*, p. 422: Sept. 12, Sept. 13, 1896).

¹¹Ribot, *Heredity*, p. 303.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 290.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 289-90, 346.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, Part Fourth, ch. 3.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 336.

¹⁷"Ignobilis," *Cassell's Latin Dictionary*, rev. J. R. V. Marchant and Joseph F. Charles (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1957). With a somewhat different critical aim than here, my former graduate student D. Joseph Lane in an impressive but as-yet-unpublished paper has stressed *ignoble*'s class-bound meaning in reference to *New Grub Street* (1891), Gissing's previous novel, which also uses *ignoble* ubiquitously and in which the character Biffen actually proposes a theory of "ignobly decent" realism in fiction. See George Gissing, *New Grub Street* (New York: Modern Library, 1926), pp. 150-52: ch. 10.

¹⁸*BIE*, 10: Pt. I, ch. 1; 40: Pt. I, ch. 2; 122: Pt. II, ch. 3; 131: Pt. II, ch. 3; 146: Pt. II, ch. 4; 174: Pt. III, ch. 2; 175: Pt. III, ch. 2; 221: Pt. III, ch. 5; 271: Pt. IV, ch. 5; 278: Pt. IV, ch. 5; 321: Pt. V, ch. 4; 388: Pt. VII, ch. 1; 394: Pt. VII, ch. 1; 402: Pt. VII, ch. 2. A few related words also occur with positive connotations: *nobly* (*BIE*, 315: Pt. V, ch. 3), *noble* (*BIE*, 392: Pt. VII, ch. 1), and *nobility* (*BIE*, 412: Pt. VII, ch. 3).

¹⁹Korg, "The Spiritual Theme of George Gissing's *Born in Exile*," pp. 131-41.

²⁰Alain Finkielkraut, *The Defeat of the Mind*, transl. Judith Friedlander (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 79-80; trans. from original French edition *La Défaite de la pensée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987).

²¹See, for example, Goode, *George Gissing: Ideology and Fiction*, pp. 59-70, and Sloan, *George Gissing: The Cultural Challenge*, pp. 111-12.

Gissing in Prison

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Gissing's arrest and imprisonment in 1876 was probably the most important event of his life. I will not attempt to give a full account of it here, but only to bring forward some newly discovered documentary evidence and to supplement Pierre Coustillas's 1963 article on the affair.¹ The evidence is the register entry for Gissing's commitment to Bellevue Prison, Hyde Road, Manchester on 6 June 1876.²

Bellevue Prison was opened in 1849 to expand prison capacity for the rapidly growing city of Manchester, and was demolished in 1892. It provided cells for 851 prisoners, 557 male and 294 female. In 1879 a total of 11,859 prisoners were sent there, 6,979 males and 4,880 females. This gives an average length of sentence of just under a month, with the women prisoners serving a bit less than this and the men a bit more. Bellevue Prison took only the small fry of Victorian criminality: the maximum sentence normally was no more than two months, and the prisoners were there by summary conviction, i.e., not for any indictable offence. Some prisoners were held in Bellevue while awaiting trial, but Gissing was bailed out by the Principal of Owens College (J. G. Greenwood) after his arrest on 31 May.³

Who were Gissing's companions in the prison, and what were their crimes? The prison register is a classic document of Victorian social control, exercised over the mainly Irish slums west of Deansgate (earlier described in Engels' *Condition of the Working Class of Manchester in 1844*). Almost as many women as men were caught up in police sweeps through the neighbourhood, and all ages from mid-teens to the elderly. The most common convictions were for "Drunk," "Drunk and Riotous," "Prostitution," "Theft," and "Assault." Some were jailed for such heinous deeds as "Pitch and Toss" (a street game), "Lodging in an Outhouse" (three vagrants), and "Stealing One Pot" (for which a "Charwoman" got three days). Many came to Bellevue because they could not or would not pay the fines assessed for their offence. Many were illiterate, judging by the few who sent or received letters, and many had a long string of similar previous offences.

Gissing was the second prisoner of forty-three (twenty-five male, eighteen female) who entered Bellevue on the 6th of June. Ahead of him in the register queue was Daniel Bowen, aged sixteen, given two months hard labour for assault. Behind him was Bridget Monahan,

born in Ireland, given one month's imprisonment as a common prostitute. Monahan was fifty-five years old and four feet ten inches tall. The warder carefully noted her appearance: "Face wrinkled and freckled. Lost several upper side teeth and one front tooth broken." Her profession was given as "Hawker" and she had sixty-seven previous convictions. Another "Common Prostitute" followed: twenty-four years old, five feet tall, twenty-two previous convictions. Given where she lived (on the edge of Deansgate) and how she behaved, it seems likely that Nell Harrison knew Bellevue from the inside, though no register entries have yet been found.

Here is my transcription of the register entry with added comments:

Register No.: 14797

Prisoner's Name: George Robert Gissing

When and by Whom Committed: 6 June. T. Dale J. F. Furniss Esq. [These would be the magistrates, sitting jointly]

By Summary Conviction: S. of A. [Session of Assizes]

For what offence or on what charge: Stealing 5/2 in money [About £10 to £15 at current value]

Sentence: One c[alendar]/month Hard Labor [This might mean the treadmill, the turning of a crank, or picking oakum]

Age last birthday: 18

Personal Description:

Height: 5-8 ½ [Gissing would have been one of the tallest men in the prison]

Complexion: Light

Hair: L[ight]/ brown

Eyes: Grey

Marks upon person and remarks: Freckled face, mole left side neck, mole right side

Professed trade or occupation: None

Place of birth: Yorkshire

Last or usual residence: Mother Margaret Victoria Place, Wakefield [Gissing had been in lodgings on Grafton Street near Owens College when arrested, but perhaps wanted to conceal his connection with the college]

Religious profession: C E [Church of England]

Extent of instruction: Well

Married or single: S[ingle]

Parents living: M[other]

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Number of Previous Committals: —

Letters received: 22/6 & 27/6 [It was quite unusual for a prisoner at Bellevue to receive or send letters. Probably only letters from next of kin were allowed, and not until two weeks had passed]

Letters sent: 24/6 & 28/6

Date of Discharge: July 5

It must have been a dreadful thing for a gentleman to be imprisoned in such a place. The irony was that Gissing, in trying to save Nell from the slums of Deansgate, was himself plunged into the lowest circle reserved for the Victorian underclass. When he made that class the subject of his earlier novels, he treated them with a mixture of sympathy and dissociation – probably the same emotions with which he endured his month in Bellevue Prison.

¹“George Gissing à Manchester,” *Etudes Anglaises*, July-September 1963, pp. 255-61.

²The prison register is held at Strangeways Prison, Southall St., Manchester. I am indebted to Kathy Willeard of H.M. Prison Service for finding the entry, and to Ray Jack for his instructive tour of Strangeways, a Victorian prison similar in its layout to Bellevue. Also useful was the anonymous pamphlet *HM Prison Manchester: The History of Prisons in Manchester*.

³John Halperin, *Gissing: A Life in Books* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982), p. 19.

A Letter from the Western Avernus
Morley Roberts to his sister Ida

Pierre Coustillas

The following letter from Morley Roberts to his sister Ida will be best appreciated by readers who have in hand Volume II of the *Collected Letters of George Gissing*. On pages 269-71 is printed a letter from Roberts to Gissing dated 19 November 1884, and it was only four days later that Roberts wrote to his sister. The two letters were sent from the same place, New Westminster, British Columbia and accompanied by the same sonnets, written on 17 November, but, naturally, the subjects dealt with by the writer only partly overlap.

The background of this correspondence is supplied by chapter XIV of Roberts's first and

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best known book, *The Western Avernus*, published by Smith, Elder & Co. in April 1887, simultaneously with *Thyrza*. Some editions of the book carry a very useful "Map of the Author's Route" pasted in at the end on which his movements, materialized by a red line, can easily be followed. After landing at New York early in 1884 he had made his way to Texas, where he found employment on a sheep ranch for a few months, then had travelled northwards to Chicago, then on to Winnipeg, from where, proceeding straight west, he had reached New Westminster. Roberts's letters of the period show that he was then working in a sawmill, a subject on which he wrote eloquently in his book:

When my cash amounted to twenty-five cents, I sought and found work in a sawmill – hard and laborious lifting of timbers, arranging of boards and planks, carting and carrying of saw-dust, flooring boards, beadings and scrollings, sashes, doors, what not. Twelve hours a day, minus one half hour for a hurried dinner – 6 A.M. to 6 P.M.; enough for a giant, enough for me, and at first more than enough. Board and thirty dollars a month for this labour, every cent earned, and more than earned surely, by sweat and fatigue of muscle, and contact with Chinamen – that strange, indomitable, persevering, vile, and wonderful race. [...] In such company in the half-open mill, one storey up in the air, I passed the days, with the whirr of belts above and below, the scream of the circular saws as they bit the advancing log of pine or spruce or Douglas fir, with the strips of bitten-out wood thrown out in a stream, and clouds of smaller sawdust, with the smiting of mallets on wedges in the cut, and the heavy fall on the greasy skids of the divided tree. And in the pool below stood a long figure with a pole balancing on a round log, pushing it into its place, with his hammer driving in iron clamps or dogs, till the chain, revolving on the drum, drags the ponderous tree to the saw, and then it rolls over and over on to the carriage, and afterwards more saw-screaming and sawdust and wedge-driving. So hour after hour, till the trees, rude and huge, fall into planks and boards and squared timbers – large for bridges or small for posts or pickets, and the waste cut into laths, and the sawdust burning in the gaping furnaces to drive the saw again.

It is essentially a romantic, adventurous but self-pitying Morley Roberts that we find in this letter; but in others, for instance in one to his sister Marion, dated 5 July 1885, at which time he was at Eagle Pass, B. C., he was quite depressed and complained that he was being forgotten by his family, except his mother. And his disappointment and bitterness could reach ambiguous dimensions when on 25 August of the same year he asked Marion whether she thought it was amusing for him *not* to get any news. "You deserve, my sister (and all the rest, save only Ida), cremation, and that before death, for not doing what you ought to do. [...] Is thy

servant a dog that he should stand on his hind legs, and beg for a few most tantalizingly-withheld crumbs of satisfaction, and then lick your Mother Hubbard hand, believing dog-like, that the cupboard is really empty? Away with thee! Go to! I am not deceived, and the truth is in me, i.e. I know. *Credat Judaeus, non ego!*” But that was about eighteen months after he had arrived in America, and loneliness rather seriously weighed upon him, whereas in late 1884 he was still enjoying his hard-won freedom from slavery in a government office.

A number of persons, events and literary allusions require identification. That Ida was the recipient is indicated in Roberts’s hand-writing on the typewritten transcription which accompanies the two quarto pages of the manuscript letter, but there would be no room for doubt since his two other sisters, Marion and Bertha, are referred to in the third person singular. From the way he quotes English or Latin authors to them, it is clear they were cultured girls. The Roberts family counted two other children, two sons. Roberts does not mention his father, William Henry Roberts (c. 1831-1908), a surveyor of taxes and a parent of the heavy type, but he does his mother Catherine (born c. 1830), with whom he seems always to have been on affectionate terms. Four of Morley’s five brothers and sisters are named in his letter: Marion (1856-1932), Cecil (1860-1894), Bertha (1862-1944), who married William Blane (1864-1936), an engineer and writer, in 1902, and Ida (1864-1953). Of Cecil only, a traveller and also something of a writer, is the life known in some detail, essentially thanks to his only book, *Adrift in America; or, Work and Adventure in the States* (1891), which the *Academy* reviewer called “the liveliest work on America since his brother first took the world into his confidence.” As for the youngest boy, Leslie Wilmot (born 1869), little has so far been discovered about him except that he was a soldier in the Boer War and in such poor health on his return that he was several times believed to be dying in the first decade of this century.

It is in extremely vague terms that Roberts alludes to his own movements. The reference to his leaving Texas, where his brother Cecil had preceded him, must be to early July 1884, according to *The Western Avernus*, and it seems to have been in April 1885 that he left New Westminster for Victoria – Cherry Creek in fact – after a fight with a Chinese waiter which is related at some length at the end of chapter XIV. “He was the cause of my leaving the place. Wanting some more meat, I asked him for some civilly enough, I am sure, but none came. Thinking he might have forgotten, I asked again, and still no meat in any reasonable time. The

final result was that I thrashed the man.” Roberts was discharged and thus happened to leave the mill only ten days before the concern went bankrupt. He then made his way back to Kamloops, some 250 miles farther north, to visit his old boss, Mr. Hughes, from whom he had received kindly letters since arriving at New Westminster.

The allusions to Gissing’s affairs are clarified by his previous letter to him, in which he expressed his pain on hearing that *The Unclassed* was comparatively a failure, and Roberts’s letter to his sister implies that it had been arranged between Gissing and his friend, to whom the novel was dedicated, that the three volumes would be sent to his relatives in Clapham pending his return from America. Ida’s flattering comment may have been passed on to Gissing in due course. Nor is the allusion to Bertz’s activities in the least obscure. His novel, *The French Prisoners*, had appeared in October and it was being favourably reviewed.¹ The story of Don, whose memory Bertz was to celebrate in his novel *Das Sabinergut* (1896), is well known. Master and dog had sailed for Tennessee in 1881 and returned two years later after the failure of Thomas Hughes’ Rugby colony. Before Bertz’s return to Germany in March 1884, his splendid

collie had found at Clapham in Roberts's relatives new masters, who, like all their neighbours, liked him very much.

If the Roberts's friends, Mrs Jones, Charlie, Ernest, Jim and "Alphonse," must inevitably remain unknown to posterity, the two other surnames in the letter have not totally been effaced by the passing of years. By Skipworth, Roberts meant Frank Markham Skipworth, the Lincolnshire artist, three years his senior, the son of a gentleman farmer who lived at Normanby Grange. After studying for two years at the Lincoln School of Art, he had spent three years at South Kensington under Edward Poynter, R.A. (1879-82). It was almost certainly at that time that Roberts, who lived much in the company of artists, as *In Low Relief* testifies, had met him. Skipworth was in due course to become a member of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters and of the Royal Institute of Oil Painters. He died in 1929. Elihu Vedder, artist, painter and modeller, was a man of another generation, born in New York in 1836. Educated at the Brinkerhoff School in Brooklyn, he had painted with Mattison at Sherburne, N. Y. and in the atelier of Picot in Paris. He worked mainly in Italy, making frequent visits to the United States. Roberts had either seen or merely read about his illustrations of the 1884 edition of FitzGerald's so-called translation of

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the Rubáyát of Omar Khayyám. The article on them ("Vedder's Accompaniment to the Song of Omar Khayyám," by Horace E. Scudder) had appeared in the November number of the *Century Magazine*. A specimen of Vedder's art can be seen in the first *Book of the Omar Khayyám Club, 1892-1910*, p. 86. By 1884 he was already a famous artist, and a member of many societies and academies whose works could be seen in the best known American galleries. He was to die in 1923.

The two sonnets Roberts sent to his sister, and in a slightly different version to Gissing, were not included in his modest collection of poems, *Song of Energy*, which Lawrence and Bullen published in 1891. Roberts did not go back home, as appears in Gissing's correspondence, until November 1886.

New Westminster, Brit. Columbia
23.11.84

My dear sister,

You are a model letter-writer. Your letter (two sheets) was and is lovely, your composition splendid, and the matter interesting and entrancing to the very last degree of piled up superlatives, and if I never get another letter from anybody in this world I shall at least be able to die with the conviction that I have been written to, not carelessly scrawled to, nor been made the recipient of bald sentences and flabby news. But we all are pretty good at this department of literature, for one of Cecil's last was refreshing and "replete with all modern conveniences,"² and the notes which Marion and mother have doubtless written, were, I know, delightful with the experiences of wild life in London, and adventures in Fleet St. and the Strand, and reminiscences of Kent and Cornwall. So Marion has [been] to Lyonesse, has she? Dear sweetheart, I know she loved it, and the emerald seas, and purple, and the grey wind waved lichens, and amber stones, and the glitter of streams, and the barren heathy uplands. Woe is me! This too is lovely, but it lacks the accompaniment of friendship; and the music of the world alone is sad and melancholy, and white streams, and lofty pines, and piney mountains with their blue curves against the eastern skies are sometimes misty with tears almost, and look like the background of a dream, not all welcome to me in my western night time, far away from daylight in the magic smoke of our own London.

Did you get my last letter to you, enclosed in a mass of M.S., some of it worthless I fear, save to loving eyes, and the keen insight of understanding what I might do? You are welcome, my dear, and endorsed are two sonnets, not over good, for how [can] I do what is beautiful, when I am busy, and the song of the circular saw sounds in my ears, and when my limbs are

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tired and aching with rush of daily toil? So till the day of the wanderer's return from beyond the stream of Ocean, do not think to get good work from the workman, who loves not to labour among lumber, save "learned lumber" like Pope's bookful blockhead.³

Now to speak of your news. I am glad you have seen Mrs. Jones, and regret her disastrous initiation into the rosy dark mysteries of the drawingroom. When you see her, say what nice things you can from me for I have a sincere regard for her, and a regret constantly for poor Charlie's fate, which may be mine or Cecil's on some black day of our calendar. – And as to beloved Ernest, when he returns, give him a fraternal handshake, and say I remember him somewhat and often in the wilderness. And so to Jim. But on the subject of the farthings. If Bertha really squandered one, she is deserving of every honest and thrifty person's severest reprehension. "Tell her so, Decius," no "Ida."⁴ Don, fair idol of my heart, is well and happy, and forgets Tennessee, and Bertz too, I doubt not. He knows not Bertz's Book, nor that his impecunious master dwells in Bohemian poverty in Stuttgart,⁵ and does not forget him. Pinch Don's ear and tell him about it. Will he wag his tail the less? Does he remember Gissing? No, he has forgotten. But Gissing has not him nor me, and his book which you wrote about was financially a failure. Your criticism would please him, and I who have not read it feel assured it must have merit indeed, when your intelligent Highness praises it so liberally in the only paper you write for (Letter Paper). Now to turn to Cecil? Is he still at home? I wrote him yesterday, and doubt his remaining in England long, tho' I did not say so. You were wrong in thinking I knew anything about his being at home. I only got his letters from Oregon this week, and they contained the first home news I have received since I left Texas, and were so very welcome. And "Alphonse" has gone to Tonquin? Well, how we do go on, we corpuscles in this world body, flying all round wildly and almost aimlessly. Still my great aim of health seems to be more attainable now than ever, and I daily improve I believe to go back a little on Sunday, that being lazy day of course, as it used to be at home. Your mentioning Skipworth takes me into Art, and I hope he will do well in it after all, and sell, not his soul in paint for money, but what is good; not potboilers. And while in this region of the soul did you read in the *Century* the article about Elihu Vedder's illustrations of the poem of Omar Khayyam? They are beautiful are they not, and the best side of the artistic school, as opposed to the despicable decorators of drawingrooms of fools, and pitiable commonplaces in paint.

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When you write you can address me at Victoria, Brit. Columbia, for I may be there soon, and at any rate it is only just across the gulf, and is easy to get at or to send you, for there are many boats running there daily. This is a town you know, with a mechanics' institute where one can get the magazines. That is a comfort anyhow. I am not out of all things tho' you and ours are not here.

Give my love to them all,
Your loving brother,
Morley C. Roberts.

Sonnet

I have no more to give, but only love
Whose hollow eyes waste wanly with desire,
Whose deadly sickness slays not, but doth tire
The soul of loveless days in heaven above;

I have no more to lure my skyhid dove.
But one full word, that is too oft a liar,
But one white rose, that blooms on Life's thornbriar,
That I have plucked for her without a glove.

There's blood upon my hands, that ran hot red
Into my heart, like sunset to the seas;
There's blood upon the rose leaves which are shed
Under the windy boughs of alien trees;
And blood too upon the arrow that was sped
By Death who had a bitter God to please.

17.11.84.

When the less world at last grows not more black
To one who wearies of himself for love
When one small stone blocks out the heaven above,
Not even her bright face can lure him back,
He shall forget all things: the footed track,
The tombs thereby; the ghosts that always move,
Even as he shall then, with all who prove
How all the world is lost for that one lack.

And he shall be forgotten in the end
And slowly light and joy shall come again
After the shadow of that passing rain

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And tears that touched the dead hand of a friend
Not of a lover for tho' he forget
The heart forgotten will remember yet.

17.11.84

[For kind permission to publish this letter, the original of which is in the Morley Roberts Papers, Special Collections, Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania, the editor wishes to thank Nancy M. Shawcross, Curator of Manuscripts.]

¹See Wulphard Stahl, "Eduard Bertz's Correspondence with Macmillan & Co., 1884-1908," in the January 1996 number of this journal, pp. 4-22.

²Interestingly, Gissing was to note this vulgar use of "replete with" in his *Commonplace Book* in 1892: "On a notice of pleasure-trips by sea from Weymouth to Torquay, it is stated that the steamer is 'replete with lavatories & a ladies' saloon.'" (p. 42)

³Roberts has in mind Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, ll. 612-13: "The bookful blockhead, ignorantly read, / With loads of learned lumber in his head."

⁴See Caesar's words in *Julius Caesar*, II, 2, 64: "I will not come to-day; tell them so, Decius."

⁵Bertz's current address was Moser Strasse 13, part., Stuttgart.

The Paying Guest and the Praise it Won in 1896

Pierre Coustillas

The Paying Guest has no claim to be one of Gissing's most significant works, but it represents one aspect of his artistic capacities that has rarely been acknowledged adequately, and indeed has been discussed at some length only twice, by C. J. Francis in the *Gissing Newsletter* and by Ian Fletcher in his Harvester Press edition, which has become about as scarce as the first English and American editions. In 1896 Cassells advertised the story in enthusiastic terms, trying to capitalize on the author's solid reputation in general as well as on his reputation for writing long thoughtful novels, with which *The Paying Guest* could easily be contrasted. Presented as "practically his first comedy" (why "practically," one wonders, since no one at Cassell's could know of Gissing's very few comic tales once published in the Chicago press?), it was said to be "a delicious bit of humour, fresh, sparkling, and abounding in skilful characteri-

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zation." Gissing disliked this advertisement, which was widely printed in dailies and weeklies alike, and he did not care much for the reviews he came across in the press. One suspects that he did not care either for the photograph of himself taken by Mendelssohn in the previous autumn that Cassells reproduced in their catalogue. Not unsuccessfully he tried to forget about the book and its more ambitious but less attractive twin, *Sleeping Fires*, with which he celebrated his release from three-decker thralldom.

A hundred years after its publication – on 7 January 1896 – it is tempting to survey the critical reception of the book which Cassells as well as Dodd, Mead & Co. in America published in what the present-day bibliographer regards as a variety of states. On the whole reviewers did the story full justice, and the two publishers, provided they subscribed to press-cutting agencies, must have received a wealth of critical responses with praise eminently suitable for advertising purposes. Thirty English and American reviews and notices have been traced to date, and the vast majority are extremely positive. A few sour notes were heard in America, partly out of animosity against English life and manners. The *Book Buyer* reviewer, Victoria-like, declared that he was not amused: "This sort of tale seems to us about as worthy as an intaglio carving in putty"; he objected to studies in the commonplace from Gissing's pen (March). The *Overland Monthly*, a magazine founded in San Francisco in 1868, was just as purblind and trenchant: "A thrashing over and over of old straw. The only thing an American has to be thankful for after wasting an hour over it is that the vulgar girl is not an American. The book is not worth reading" (April). On the English side two examples of irrational ill humour have also been found. It is to be feared that the *Star* reviewer took a stand against the book which was largely dictated by the (imaginary?) necessity not to offend its readers, and by its dislike of those short novels which were becoming very common after the painless demise of the three-volume novel at the advanced age of eighty. It is hard to believe that a reviewer who had read the book could find that "it lacks the earnestness, the reality, the finish and the humanity which are preeminently the characteristics of this writer," and to agree with him that "The story is short, but still too long to bear the strain of spun-out incidents" (21 January). The same groundless argument was put forward by the *Sketch*, a weekly which was currently publishing the twenty very short sketches commissioned to Gissing by its editor C. K. Shorter:

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"The story on the whole is disappointing; it is tedious. Although brief there is in it, in spite of its limits, Mr Gissing's besetting sin of diffusiveness" (29 January). The offender, who signed his

piece, "O. O.," was no other than William Robertson Nicoll, the editor of the English *Bookman*, a literary chatterbox with strong nonconformist affiliations. As Gissing had one of his sketches, "The Little Woman from Lancashire," in the same number (29 January), he is bound to have read O. O.'s assessment of his latest book, doubtless wondering whether Shorter, who was as inconsistent as his Free Churchman contributor and friend, had any editorial policy. He left no comment.

These were about the only hostile assessments of Gissing's clever satire of suburban mores, for the objections from *Hearth and Home* were directed at the kind of individuals – actual living people – who were so graphically depicted in the story rather than at the novel itself (2 April). *The Paying Guest* was much praised by all the other newspapers and periodicals that were given an opportunity to publish a review. Gissing only saw a minority of them and, if anything, he was as much embarrassed as gratified by the accolades the book received from the press. The four reviews reprinted in *Gissing: The Critical Heritage* give some idea of the pleasure that serious critics had in reading this new social novel, so different in tone and length from its predecessors, yet once more so characteristic of its author. Thus the *Daily News*: "Mr George Gissing is the English Balzac of middle-class suburban life. The tragedy of its respectability, its genteel inanities, its dulness and vulgarities is depicted with convincing and unexaggerated truthfulness. The stamp of sincerity is on all that Mr Gissing writes. His last story *The Paying Guest* [...] contains in a minute compass many of his finest qualities [...] Mr. Gissing's style is admirable. There is not a bungling touch throughout marring the clearness of his execution" (10 January). The *New York Times* wrote in this strain: "Mr Gissing's studies of English middle-class life and character are models of veracity, and are always as interesting as any fiction of a sober and unromantic character can be. *The Paying Guest* is as fine and true in its way as *In the Year of Jubilee*" (25 January). In the *Academy* Percy Addleshaw was exultant: "There is pathos in the book for those who have eyes to see, pathos nonetheless real because only hinted at. Miss Derrick, the paying guest, is drawn by a master hand. [...] Even Mr Gissing will find it hard to equal *The Paying Guest*. It is a subtle study of human nature, an excellent bit of writing and composition" (29 February). For the *Publishers' Circular* the story revealed in the author an unsuspected talent, being "written with great brightness and vivacity, and

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delightfully humorous, both in conception and execution, and full of happy touches of characterization [...] We trust he will make haste to give the world a further example of his skill in comedy" (1 February). And the *Weekly Sun* wrote in the same vein: "A more piquant and diverting story we have not read for a long while. It ought to circulate by tens of thousands" (19 February). Gissing was made by the *Globe* "the apostle of villadom," "the self-elected and unapproachable historian of suburbia" in this book "full of cleverness and attractively out of the ruck" (22 January).

What appealed most to readers, professional or not, was Gissing's apparent optimism, which in fact was entirely on the surface – if he had in a second volume related the story of Mr Cobb and Louise Derrick's married life, the tone might have been reminiscent of the more acrimonious passages of *In the Year of Jubilee*. Perhaps it was what the reviewer of the *Philadelphia Record* (31 January) meant when, in a warmly appreciative assessment of Gissing's work in general and of *The Paying Guest* in particular, he wrote that, all things considered, he had produced a picture which despite its ludicrous aspects, was a most depressing one.

A truthful one it was at all events, and from this opinion no critic had the heart to dissent. It was left to *To-Day* to attempt a synthesis, under the title "The Diary of a Bookseller: "I am not sneering at middle-class people in the least; but some of them are occasionally rather trying. What has struck me in reading Mr. Gissing's book is the charm with which he makes people

who would be supremely commonplace and uninteresting in real life, full of fascination to read about” (1 February). One hundred years after original publication, on being asked why he did not add a few Gissing titles to his list, a Chicago publisher admitted that he was toying with the idea of reprinting *The Paying Guest*. May this project materialize.

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Thirty Letters about Gissing To Be Rescued from Oblivion

The posthumous lives of writers are full of mysteries and that of Gissing is no exception. Fresh evidence of this cropped up a few years ago in editorial correspondence with Sotheby & Co., the auctioneers. A catalogue the firm published for a sale which took place on 13 December

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1950, when interest in Gissing was at its lowest, was discovered to contain an astonishing entry, numbered 140:

A series of 30 ALS, etc, concerning George Gissing, the novelist, from his friends and contemporaries, including W. D. Howells, W. J. Locke, Richard Le Gallienne, Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells, Sir Edmund Gosse etc.

The lot was purchased by Stonehill of New Haven, Conn., for the remarkably low sum of £12. Where the letters eventually went is unknown, for the firm, when consulted, declared it had no records. Research in the Beinecke Library, an obvious possible home for such a group of letters, was also in vain.

Now careful analysis of the wording of the entry prompts one to make a few speculative remarks. By “30 ALS, etc” one should probably understand that the material consisted not only of letters, but of notes and perhaps postcards, not necessarily by thirty writers. Further, if Wells and Gosse are known to have been friends of Gissing’s, neither Howells, Le Gallienne nor W. J. Locke ever met him. He read books by the first two, but is not likely ever to have heard of W. J. Locke, who did not make a name for himself as a novelist until after Gissing’s death. However, Locke’s interest in Gissing is attested by his contribution to the special number of the *London Bookman* for January 1915. As for Bennett, although he never seems to have been in touch with Gissing, he followed his career with great attention and reviewed a number of his books, anonymously or pseudonymously in various journals, and his correspondence with Wells shows that they exchanged impressions about Gissing’s work. If two more aspects of the puzzling batch of thirty letters are borne in mind, namely the fact that Wells and Le Gallienne were friends, and that in the Gissing-Wells correspondence, Wells’s letters are far less numerous than Gissing’s, it seems that the core of the batch might consist of Wells letters happening to be offered for sale with others received by him.

This fragile assumption may well be totally unreliable, but that it may be proved to be so, the thirty letters must be rescued from oblivion, and the editor of the *Journal* would gratefully receive information on the subject or suggestions about means of tracing them. They are sure to contain new information. [Ed.]

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Gissing on the Internet

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Like everything else, information about Gissing has entered cyberspace. Readers who have access to the internet can obtain a great deal of surprising and useful information about our author through a variety of research engines, though much of it may be repetitive. I have access to the internet only through my university's navigator, which provides Netscape, but I'm sure that these academically-connected sources are the best ones for us. My random explorations have turned up the following entries.

Using Netscape, I entered the URL for the Victorian Electronic Conference (List) Archive:
<http://www.indiana.edu/~libref/victoria>

This will bring up a screen asking you to "search and browse" the records of the last four years of the conferences's e-mail discussion. Click the year you want, open the link, and enter "Gissing" in the box labeled "Any word(s) in the archives (full-text search)" and this will show the postings about Gissing for that year.

According to the notice, there were as many as 132 postings for Gissing in 1995, though they were much fewer in other years. Many of these messages are incorrect, repetitive, irrelevant or trivial, though there are also many valuable and informative ones. There are queries and answers about teaching Gissing, about specific themes and about related topics. One person asked for the address of the *Gissing Journal*, and it was supplied by another correspondent. The writer's e-mail address appears with each posting, so you can immediately get in touch with him or her. The archive shows how many people are teaching, reading and thinking about Gissing, and you will come across some familiar names as you read the postings.

The Electronic Conference is one of the sources conducted by the Victorian group at Indiana University, whose URL is:

<http://www.Indiana.edu/~victoria>

That screen gives access to "discussion groups." Click that to bring up the Victorian Research Web:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~victoria/discussion.html #search>

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which will offer the Victorian Electronic Conference archive described above, which deals with Victorian topics in general, and will enable you to select for Gissing.

Of the browsers I've tried, the only productive one was Alta Vista (<http://altavista.digital.com>). This brought up a short list which included the painter, Roland Gissing, the village of Gissing in Norfolk, and a notice from a dealer in rare editions. Searching in non-literary sources such as Lycos will turn up Mary Gissing, who has written on wood sealants.

It is also fun, and potentially useful to scan the on-line catalogues of libraries on the internet to see what Gissing titles they have. I seem to have access to only a few through my university navigator. These are self-directing, once you are connected. The University of California asks you to enter CAT at the prompt (for catalogue), "pa" plus the name of the author with the instruction "Find," followed by "D." For Gissing, this produced a list of 236 records distributed among the University's various centers. "Find Coustillas" produced a list of 37.

The University of British Columbia catalogue addresses itself to its own members, but outsiders can use it by typing the "Enter" key when directed. After choosing CAT, one enters one's choice "n=Gissing," and this brings up a list of 28 items. *The Town Traveller*, I noted, is

held only on microfilm.

The University of Michigan asks you to select a data bank, the proper code in this case being MCAT. The request is made as "a=Gissing," and this brings up a list of 101 entries, about 8 to a screen. The next screen is obtained by typing FOR. One curiosity in this list was "Note Paris," identified as a signed postcard dated November 16, 1900. [See *Collected Letters*, volume VIII, p. 110. Ed.]

There are, of course, many other approaches to library research by computer, and no doubt other discussion groups that refer to Gissing. The *Journal* will be delighted to hear about these from its readers.

* * *

Book Reviews

Patrick French, *The Life of Henry Norman*, London: Unicorn Press, 1995.

Occasionally books on men or women who were not, or not essentially, writers and with whom Gissing was in touch are published – a hundred years after the contact in actual life. Such

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a book, published in 1987, was *The Summers of Shotton* by Brian Redhead and Sheila Gooddie, another, issued early this year, is *The Life of Henry Norman* by Patrick French, which is said on the copyright page to be published by Unicorn Press (21 Afghan Road, London SW11 2QD), but which a leaflet tells us is available from Norman's granddaughter, Miranda Gunn, whose address is given below.

This is a curious volume in several respects. For one thing, despite some appearances, it is a privately printed book published in a limited edition of 400 copies. Then it is a biography commissioned by ten of the biographee's descendants, a fact which the average reader cannot find encouraging as it is well-known that a biographer working under such conditions cannot be, or at least feel, free to write as he would if ten, indeed many more, pairs of eyes, were not looking over his shoulder as his pen runs on. Next comes the disturbing admission that since this biography was not written for an academic audience, it does not include footnotes or references in the text. And, as though these limitations were not enough, the biographer tells us that most of the information contained in the book (viii + 144 pp.) came from Henry Norman's own papers currently in the care of one of his granddaughters. Since these papers, being private property, are not readily available, many statements must of necessity be taken on trust. Thus it is difficult to reconcile the statement that Norman was "a meticulous and comprehensive collector and collator of his own history" with the fact that he destroyed all documents that concerned his first wife, M^énie Muriel Dowie, the author of two good-selling books, *A Girl in the Karpathians* (1891) and *Gallia* (1895). It is clear that no research was made or even attempted in some quarters. The literary contacts between, on the one hand, Norman and his first wife, and prominent members of the world of letters, on the other, have been ignored, so that we have a Life watched from a number of angles, private, journalistic, political, but not at all literary. As Gissing's diary among other documents testifies, he was in touch with the Normans from early 1895 to 1898, but Patrick French is apparently unaware of this. The one reference to Gissing is a background-filling mention of *The Odd Women* in a passage where *Gallia* is briefly discussed. Other writers with whom Norman was also in touch – Hardy and Shaw – get equally short commons. Well-researched (the epithet occurs in the leaflet about the volume) the book may be in *some* respects, but definitely not in others. Nothing is said of Norman's activities and capacities as literary editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, although over fifty

years after his death some scholars still see him especially from that angle. Nor is Norman's

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work on his own glossy periodical *The World's Work* – "An Illustrated Monthly Magazine of National Efficiency and Social Progress" – adequately discussed, although a file of it seems to be extant in the family archive. Lastly, the absence of a bibliography and an index makes the book very difficult to consult after the first reading.

All this sounds damnably negative, and the picture could still be darkened. Yet the book will be useful to anyone who reads it with a view to finding reliable information about the Norman family down to the present moment, the volume ending with a parade of the fifty-three direct descendants. It will be even more seriously useful to historians of the press and political parties from the turn of the century to the early 1920s when Norman, a Liberal of the pushing kind who was made a knight in 1906, then a baronet in 1915, retired from political life. That he was not created a Lord was only due to a negative decision of his, prompted by a not unjustified feeling that accepting such an honour could hardly be reconciled with his early political career as a Radical. Henry was, until the age of sixty-five, a very busy man – a writer, a politician, a traveller who, born of a humble Nonconformist stock, veered to atheism, yet remarried in the traditional Anglican style once he had divorced Ménie, like him an adventurous traveller and a disappointed feminist. His social ascension was certainly due to hard work, but it was greatly facilitated by uncommon ambition as well as by his second marriage – to a very wealthy young woman, the Hon. Priscilla MacLaren, who was about twenty-six years his junior and no less ambitious than he was. He played a key role in Lloyd George's administrations, notably at the time of the People's Budget as organiser of the Budget League. His belief in social progress and reform was not incompatible with love of comfort and social contacts with people in high circles. This appears clearly, if rather implicitly, in Patrick French's book. Norman made time for an astonishing number of things in his long life (1857-1939), as the *Who Was Who* entry about him confirms. He was a pioneer of both the motor-car (one of his affinities with Kipling, although they were in opposite political camps) and of wireless telegraphy. By and large he looked forward, although his biographer gives us to understand that his attitude to the problem of Home Rule for Ireland and to the Empire in general was no longer that of a Radical at the end of his life. Evidence is available that he was on the whole a capable linguist, a fact possibly obscured by some odd transcriptions of foreign words. His knowledge of French and German was a great asset to him when, until middle age, he travelled up and down the earth, meeting all

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sorts of worthies, genuine or spurious, with whom his many interests and achievements put him in touch.

The man that Gissing had known in the 1890s – the journalist on the *Daily Chronicle* and the fellow member of the Omar Khayyám Club – is more and more difficult to recognize as one moves nearer to the time of his death on 4 June 1939, a couple of weeks before the outbreak of the second world war. And the inventory of his possessions, of which some idea is given on p. 136, shows how little the two men had in common after all, despite their friendly relationships at a time when they were both coming men in the contiguous worlds of literature and journalism. The eight pages of illustrations, with photographs of Norman from the age of twenty-nine to the late 1930s, of his successive wives (Ménie died in America in 1945 and Priscilla, generally known as Fay, in 1964), and of some of their descendants enable one to visualize the world in which Gissing's friend moved in the thirty-three years by which he outlived him. A couple of paragraphs near the end of the book round off the picture. "An inventory of his possessions was made in order that probate could be granted on his will. These included a large collection of

guns, including a Remington magazine rifle and four revolvers. Then came a collection of camera equipment, gold watch chains and silver cigarette cases, oriental animal skins, 1,250 French francs, 25 bottles of champagne, a Privy Council uniform and a velvet court suit, two pairs of old opera glasses, four leather trunks of clothing, three dispatch cases and a large collection of books – in short, all the relics and detritus of a long and varied life.” Only the last item is relevant to Gissing studies. Did it include the two presentation copies of *Sleeping Fires* and *The Paying Guest* which were offered for sale in the 1980s? Most likely it did, a sign that the assertion relayed in this book that Norman destroyed all that belonged to his first (adulterous) wife, must be taken cautiously.

Copies of the book published in red cloth with gilt titling, are available at £25.00 plus £1 for packing and postage from Miranda Gunn, Ramster, Chiddingfold, Surrey GU8 4SN. Cheques should be made payable to the Henry Norman Book Fund. — Pierre Coustillas

Collected Essays of John Goode, edited by Charles Swann, with an introduction by Terry Eagleton, Keele: Keele University Press, 1995.

This is a big book and it was a good idea to publish it, as a number of essays it contains were buried in the files of little known periodicals. Besides Goode’s admirers understandably

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thought that at least some of these essays deserved a new lease of life. But it is a big book which is not what it claims to be – it is only a selection from the critic’s writings, and not all the so-called essays were genuine essays, conceived and written as such. What we are invited to read or reread is a substantial selection from Goode’s literary criticism, strongly marked by his doctrinaire political opinions which, by definition, can only be shared – shared less heartily now than thirty or twenty or even ten years ago – by a minority of readers. John Goode was stridently highbrow and, in the main, he did not approve of literature that did not conform with his political opinions. He would, with spasmodic persistence which was remarkable though scarcely acknowledged by specialists, analyse the works of a limited number of novelists who fascinated him, and he did so invariably in the light of his own ideology. Perhaps wisely he did not venture out of the Victorian age. The criteria he applied to the literature of the period were questionable and he may have felt that they would have been oddly irrelevant if applied to, say, the Elizabethan drama or the eighteenth-century novel.

Besides the frequent linguistic obscurities (one thinks of what Virginia Woolf wrote of Meredith’s style – “now he twists himself into iron knots; now he lies flat as a pancake”) and the ideological bullying about which he never had perceptible second thoughts that might reconcile the sceptical reader, objections have been raised against the critic’s dehumanized attitude in another sense of the epithet – being an ideologue, Goode thought he could dispense with a solid knowledge of Gissing’s life as he did with reliable bibliographical data. He was the sort of critic who can devote a long chapter (17 pages) to a Gissing novel (*In the Year of Jubilee*) and never see that he had not read the title correctly. Or he would write that all Gissing’s novels in the early 1890s were three-deckers or that Edith Sichel’s well known article on Gissing and Besant as philanthropic novelists had appeared, not in *Murray’s* but in *Fraser’s* [sic] *Magazine* [sic]. The impression he gave, especially in his long assessment of *The Nether World* in *Tradition and Tolerance in Nineteenth Century Fiction* (1966), was that he youthfully rejoiced in projecting an image of himself as a brash, trenchant radical. When a text gave him no opportunity of being ideologically aggressive, he indulged in making ponderous, winding, methodological statements, assuming an air of profundity to which some fellow critics gave another name. Such tendencies will not be frequently observed in the criticism on Gissing

reprinted in the present volume, for the simple reason that of the five main pieces that Goode

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devoted to him in addition to his critical study in book form, only one is revived – the one entitled “Gissing, Morris and English Socialism.”

Although well-meant, the introduction by Terry Eagleton is not likely to achieve its purpose in all respects. His flamboyant, strenuously hyperbolic assessment of Goode’s work will not strike all readers as well-advised. One of Goode’s last essays, “For a Pilgrim of Hope,” was an essay especially written for Terry Eagleton’s fiftieth birthday, and the *rapprochement* confers upon the introduction an air of what the Victorians called “log-rolling.” Furthermore it contains a few extraordinary statements that will cause some eyebrows to rise. Eagleton, for instance, praises his late friend’s “formidable scholarship,” adding as a supporting statement that “he knew just how many columns *The Times* of 1886 devoted to novel reviewing” – a strange yardstick with which to measure anybody’s scholarship. Still more startling is Eagleton’s admiration of Goode’s originality in “juxtaposing” Gissing and Positivism! Gissing having introduced Comte’s doctrine into his very first novel, *Workers in the Dawn*, the praise given to Goode would have embarrassed him seriously could he have read it.

The contribution of Charles Swann, author of an important article on *Born in Exile*, to this beautifully produced volume is difficult to assess. It seems limited to the choice of texts and to the helpful bibliography, but whoever wrote the blurb on the rear flap of the dust-jacket had not looked very carefully into the book. The bibliography is not to be found at the end, but between the introduction and the first chapter.

Pierre Coustillas

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Notes and News

Two successive numbers of the *Times Literary Supplement* contained references to recent books on the Great War – a painful subject which was inevitably mentioned in connection with the eightieth anniversary of Walter Gissing’s death in our last number. Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson have published a volume entitled *Passchendaele: The Untold Story* (Yale University Press, £19.95, ISBN 0-300-06692-9) which Brian Bond reviewed on 12 July, p. 4, under the title “Worse than the Somme?” He began as follows: “The Battle of the Somme in 1916, and especially its catastrophic opening day on July 1, has now become the popular reference point

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for the dreadful conditions of trench warfare and mass slaughter deriving from the incompetence of the British high command...” Quite right most probably, but as this is still a very sore point with many, what had led to this mass slaughter was worth recalling, as it is difficult to refer to such things dispassionately. The other book, merely mentioned under “Listings” on 19 July, is *The Fierce Light: The Battle of the Somme, July-November 1916: Prose and Poetry*, edited by Anne Powell (Palladour, Hirwaun House, Aberporth, Cardigan SA43 9EU, £12, ISBN 0-9521678-1-6).

While the last volume of Gissing’s *Collected Letters* is being printed, Dent are preparing the new edition of *The Whirlpool* (ed. William Greenslade) to be published early next year as one more Everyman Paperback. The illustration for the cover will be “Piccadilly in June” by Rose Barton (Chris Beetles Ltd, London/Bridgeman Art Library, London), which depicts a

young woman on the steps of a building, looking down towards Piccadilly crowded with carriages. *Tracce*, the Italian publishers, are to bring out a small collection of Gissing short stories in Italian translation, with an introduction by Pierre Coustillas and an afterword by Emanuela Ettore, the translator.

George Gissing's *Memorandum Book: A Novelist's Notebook, 1895-1902*, edited by Bouwe Postmus, of the University of Amsterdam, will be published in October by the Edwin Mellen Press, 16 College Street, Lampeter, Ceredigion, SA48 7DX, Wales. £39.95. ISBN 0-7734-4191-3. The publishers' pre-publication flyer informs prospective purchasers of the volume that they can save 20 per cent on the list price by using their Mastercard/Visa and ordering by telephone (+1570) 42 33 56 (United Kingdom). The book can also be ordered by post. £2.50 should be added for shipping and handling. This offer expires on 31 October 1996.

The *New Dictionary of National Biography*, now under preparation under the general editorship of Colin Matthew, will contain a new entry on Gissing. It will replace Thomas Seccombe's 1912 piece which has become obsolete. Short entries will be devoted for the first time to Algernon Gissing and Morley Roberts. The dictionary is scheduled for publication in 2001.

Readers looking for information about The Modern Library, the American series in which *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* and *New Grub Street* were reprinted in 1918 and 1926

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respectively and kept in print until 1942, would probably be well-advised to read *Firebrand: The Life of Horace Liveright* by Tom Dardis (Random House, 1995). In association with Albert Boni, Liveright was the first publisher of the Modern Library and, by reprinting Gissing's then two best-selling titles, he did much to sustain his reputation. *Firebrand* contains a useful bibliography and a number of photographs; it is published at \$27.50.

The July-September number of *Calabria sconosciuta* (no. 71) will contain an article entitled "Rossano in Lenormant e Gissing." Its author, Francesco Badolato, is the subject of a full-page illustrated article, "Fatti e personaggi: Sulle orme di Gissing," by Annalisa Valente, in the *Gazetta di Merate e della Brianza* (13 July 1996, p. 3). This is an interview with three photographs of Dott. Badolato and an attractive portrait of him that hangs in his study. What are we to think of this statement of Annalisa Valente's: "E' tra i pochi conoscitori italiani (forse l'unico) della opere di Gissing"?

A big quarto book that would have appealed to Gissing, *I Greci in occidente* (The Greeks in the Western World), was published earlier this year by Bompiani (lire 85,000). It contains splendid illustrations, notably one of the "Tavole Palatine" at Metaponto, a fine drawing of which Gissing had included in the first edition of *By the Ionian Sea*. The book is really a catalogue of an important exhibition currently held in Venice. Further details will be given when a copy of the English edition, which is said to be available, has reached us.

Considering that Wanda von Sacher-Masoch was one of Gabrielle Fleury's friends that Gissing met in Paris and that she planned to translate some of his works (but forgot her commitment), it is of some interest to record the publication of a book on her and her husband, *Wanda und Leopold von Sacher-Masoch: Szenen einer Ehe. Eine kontroverielle Biographie*, with an afterword by Adolf Opel. The book, which contains good photographs, is published in Vienna by Wiener Frauenverlag. A positive review of it by Wulfhard Stahl appeared in *Der*

kleine Bund, the cultural supplement to the Swiss weekly *Der Bund* (“Über Masochismus,” 14 September 1996, p. 5). This piece, half a column long, reveals that either the editor of the book or its reviewer has discovered the date of Wanda’s death, 1933. She was eighty-eight.

No less controversial is John Carey’s book, *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (1992), which contains some grotesque twisting of Gissing’s social ideas, and its ranking as fascists a

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number of English intellectuals who were certainly nothing of the kind. A reviewer of the recently published German translation (Andreas Nentwich in *Die Zeit* for 24 May) pertinently wonders who is fascist (*Wer Faschist ist*). To judge from the reviews of the English edition that appeared a few years ago, it would seem the English writers concerned were found not guilty.

At a SHARP conference in Worcester, Mass., Bill Bell, of the University of Edinburgh, read a paper on *New Grub Street* on 20 July. The panel on “Reinventing the Author” was chaired by Stephen Crook of the New York Public Library.

In a recent book on the Yorkshire village of Crigglestone, near Wakefield, Keith Wainwright gives new biographical information on one of Matthew Bussey Hick’s daughters, Gertrude (b. 1861), well-known to Gissing who mentions her in his correspondence, but a shadowy figure nonetheless. It is now established that she married a Kettering doctor named Oldfield in 1903, a marriage of which twin daughters were born, Margaret and Dorrie, but which soon ended in separation. Gertrude was then offered the management of a laundry at Chapelthorpe, near Crigglestone, and after taking a course for this, she successfully ran the laundry from 1906 to 1920. She had previously been matron at Kettering Hospital.

Tiger Books, a firm of antiquarian booksellers working from private premises (Yew Tree Cottage, Westbere, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 0HH) announce a pocket-sized booklet on Gissing’s first editions and their variants. “How aware are you of the issue points surrounding your favourite author?” the announcement reads on the back cover of an unnumbered catalogue dated 08/96. “To know these is to be confident that you are getting value for money when purchasing those elusive first editions.” Checklists on six Victorian authors and Mark Twain, varying in length from 28 to 60 pages are available at prices which range from £10 to £16.50 for a number of items which so far has reached a maximum of 290 for Mark Twain. The volume on Gissing is said to be coming soon. It will be interesting to see of what issue points the compilers are aware. Very likely only first English, not American, editions will be taken into account. A reasonable guess is that if some points are overlooked, new ones will be revealed.

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Recent Publications

Volume

George Gissing, *By the Ionian Sea: Notes of a Ramble in Southern Italy*, Evanston, Illinois: The Marlboro Press/Northwestern, 1996. Pp. 146. \$13.95. ISBN 0-8101-6010- 2. A nicely produced paperback with “View of Vesuvius from the Bridge of St. Januarius, Naples,” by Gustaf Söderberg on the front cover, and a map of Southern Italy by Patsy Welch.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Ann Ardis, *New Women: New Novels. Feminism and Early Modernism*, New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1990. Contains passages on *The Odd Women*.

Andrew Michael Roberts, *The Novel* (Bloomsbury Guides to English Literature), London: Bloomsbury, 1993. The entry on Gissing is on pp. 171-72, that on *New Grub Street* on pp. 243-44. *The Odd Women* appears in the entry on "New Woman."

John R. Greenfield (ed.), *Dictionary of British Literary Characters. 18th- and 19th-Century Novels*, New York: Facts on File, 1993. In this big quarto volume (655 pages) are to be found entries on 11,663 characters in 486 novels by major and some minor writers. The entries are short, but informative. In his Preface Greenfield defines his editorial policy as follows: "In addition to comprehensive coverage of established British novelists, the editors have sought to include a representative sampling of novels by lesser-known authors, including many women writers. In general, three broad criteria were followed in selecting the novels included herein: (1) has the novelist or the novel become established so as to have achieved a degree of permanence?; (2) has the novelist or the novel received scholarly or critical attention?; (3) has the novel achieved a degree of popularity in its own time or in later times? A novel or novelist that meets two or in some cases only one of these general criteria may qualify for inclusion." Gissing's twenty-two novels are covered by Jacob Korg, from *Born in Exile*, with 23 characters, to *Workers in the Dawn*, with another 23. This is a nicely printed reference work which will be useful to scholars as well

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as to ordinary readers. Among its specific features is an index, alphabetical by author, of all titles, each title being followed by an alphabetical list of those characters included in the *Dictionary*.

Joseph H. Gardner, "Reviews," *American Notes and Queries*, Vol. 7, 1994, pp. 181-83. Review of Bouwe Postmus's edition of Gissing's *American Notebook*.

John Peck (ed.), *New Casebooks: 'David Copperfield' and 'Hard Times'*, London: Macmillan, and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995. Gissing appears on pp. 29 and 218.

Francesco Badolato, "Scrittori vittoriani: Gissing tra positivismo e pessimismo," *Il Corriere di Roma*, 15 June 1996, p. 15 (Second Part). Continued in the number for 30 June, also on p. 15.

Wulfhard Stahl, "Eduard Bertz (1853-1931). Erste Briefe. Ansätze zu einer Bio-Bibliographie," *Zeitschrift für Germanistik* (published by Peter Lang), Neue Folge 2, 1996, pp. 414-27. The first letters concerned are those to Heinrich Rehfeldt, who frequently appears in Gissing's correspondence with Bertz. Arthur Young, many years ago, was the first scholar to mention and translate passages from these letters which are very informative about Bertz in those early days of his relationship with Gissing. The five letters, written at Pammenter Cottage, Summer-Hill Road, West Green Park, Tottenham, Middlesex were all written in 1880 (4 and 21 March, 30 June, 15 July and 30 August). Their publication fills a big gap in Bertz-Gissing studies, as they contain important passages on Gissing and Bertz's "contribution" to *Workers in the Dawn*. The 69 notes offer hitherto unavailable information on members of Bertz's family.

Paul Bailey (ed.), *The Oxford Book of London*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. This is a paperback edition, available at £7.99, of a book first published last year. The extract anthologized by Paul Bailey is a passage from chapter III of *New Grub Street* ("Eight flights of stairs...darkness would soon fall"). Also of interest are extracts from W. N. P. Barbellion, the ill-fated writer who saw himself as a replica of Godwin Peak, from A. C. Benson, Conrad, Arthur Morrison, V. S. Pritchett, H. G. Wells, and the excellent poem by William Plomer, "A Ticket for the Reading Room."

Subscriptions

The Gissing Journal is published four times a year, in January, April, July and October. Subscriptions are normally on a two-year basis and begin with the January number.

Rates per annum are as follows:

Private subscribers: £10.00

Libraries: £15.00

Single copies can be supplied as well as sets for back years.

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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.

This journal is indexed in the *MLA Annual Bibliography*, in the Summer number of *Victorian Studies* and *The Year's Work in English Studies*.

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