

THE GISSING JOURNAL

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

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*In the Year of Jubilee* and American Grundyism

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In writing *In the Year of Jubilee* (1894) Gissing clearly availed himself of the change to a more permissive literary climate that had taken place during the last decade. The difficulties involved in the publication of *The Unclassed* (1884), with its prostituted heroine, no longer existed. At that time Gissing complained bitterly to Thomas Hardy that “one may not be thorough; reticences & superficialities have so often to fill places where one is willing to put in honest work.”<sup>1</sup> Nine years later Gissing, though content with the new openness, feared that “the new wine of freedom tends to excess.”<sup>2</sup>

In *Jubilee* Gissing used this freedom mainly to describe a young woman’s sexual awakening and frustration, her sexual debut and subsequent pregnancy. Evidently, the English reading public was considered ready for a new kind of explicitness since there is no evidence that the publisher or the reviewers reacted negatively to the description of sexual matters in the

novel.

When the first American edition of *Jubilee* was published by Appleton in 1895, matters were different; no corresponding change of climate had occurred in America.<sup>3</sup> The works of European authors like Zola and Hardy were heavily censored when serialized in American magazines, and this was still the country where an English gentleman could shock an American matron “by an incautious though innocent reference to the temperature of [his] morning tub.”<sup>4</sup> Even if the publication of books called for less censure than that of magazines, *Jubilee*, with or without Gissing’s consent, was subjected to extensive cuts. That these mainly concerned sexual matters is not surprising, but the degree of fastidiousness evinced sometimes is. The blue-pencilling also extends to passages which could be regarded as anti-marriage and anti-American propaganda. All in all, 24 cuts were made, ranging from single words to passages of several pages.

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In presenting the censored material I have chosen to divide it into four categories: descriptions of sexual behaviour and discussions of sexual morals, anti-marriage material, sexual vocabulary and anti-American material. I also hope to show how the bowdlerisation has affected the style and characterization of *Jubilee* and to discuss whether Gissing knew of or accepted the changes.

#### *Sexual behaviour and sexual morals*

Explicit descriptions of sexual actions are, of course, non-existent in Gissing’s novels, or in any novel at that time for that matter (unless we include pure erotica). Metaphor and circumlocution were used to describe the culmination of a love affair, but naturally these could be more or less suggestive. The scene where Nancy is on one of her secret walks with Tarrant and is lost in a reverie with her eyes fixed on their shadows is a portent of their subsequent sexual union: “The black patches by chance touched. She moved so as to part them, and then changed her position so that they touched again – so that they blended (A104:E115).”<sup>5</sup> It is a crucial scene since it shows that Nancy is by no means the innocent victim of a brutal seducer, but its evident significance was, of course, reason enough for its deletion in the American edition.

The passage where Nancy soon afterwards gives herself to Tarrant is subjected not only to blue-pencilling but to actual change. The line “and he did carry her through the brushwood, away into the shadow of the trees” (E133) is without further ado replaced with the flat and empty “and they went on among the trees” (A121), thereby avoiding the confrontation with the idea of extra-marital sex and the associations that the word “shadow” might evoke in an imaginative reader.

A subject even more delicate than that of the sexual act was female sexuality, the mere existence of sexual feelings or lust in a woman. Consequently, the three passages which describe Nancy’s passionate nature and her sexual awakening are deleted. Even on Jubilee night “[h]er blood was heated by close air and physical contact” (A62:E68) and after her meeting with Tarrant at Teignmouth, idleness and the “debilitating climate” are condemned for her “lawless imagination,” or sexual fantasies. A section of six lines has been deleted, describing her frustration and how “[w]ith luxurious heedlessness she cast aside every thought that might have sobered her; even as she at length cast off all her garments, and lay in the warm midnight naked upon her bed” (A103:E113).

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Less obvious are the reasons for the third deletion in this group which reflects Nancy's qualms after having yielded to her passionate feelings: "It was because I had no will of my own left, because I lived only in the thought of you day and night" (A140:E154). One might perhaps imagine the editor's sense of the potential danger of a woman having no will of her own, and his wish to protect young female readers from identifying with such an unprincipled heroine.

In contrast to female sexuality, and as examples of the sexual double-standard, some manifestations of male sexuality were acknowledged and escaped the editor's eagle eye. Consequently, American readers could acquaint themselves with Tarrant's light view of adultery when he admits that "[f]aithful in the technical sense he had not been, but the casual amours of a young man caused him no self-reproach" (A307:E338) and how Horace "burned and panted at the proximity of [Fanny's] white flesh" (A81:E89). But the line is drawn when Horace, in his desperation after Fanny's betrayal, indulges in debauchery:

Love of a worthy woman tells for chastity even in the young and sensual;  
love of a Fanny French merely debauches the mind and inflames the  
passions. Secure in his paganism, Horace followed where the lures of  
London beckoned him; he knew not reproach of conscience; shame offered  
but thin resistance to his boiling blood. (A214:E237)

The reason for this cut, I believe, is not Horace's "boiling blood" (even if Nancy's just "heated" blood was taboo), but the reference to less virtuous women with the tempting capacity to inflame passion, and Horace's unchristian lack of conscience.

Owing to the deletions of all reference to female sexuality, allusions to passionate feelings between wife and husband were also subjected to censorial cuts. When Tarrant returns to Nancy after his headlong flight abroad, he regards her with renewed interest. Here, nine lines are excised describing how "he felt his blood grow warm" and his somewhat brutal desire: "A familiar touch would bring the colour to her cheeks, the light of resentment to her eyes. Passion made him glad of the estrangement which compelled a new wooing, and promised, on her part, a new surrender" (A337:E371). It might be the word "new" that disturbed the editor here, just because it alludes to the first surrender at Teignmouth. Since that event was glossed over, subsequent references to it throughout the novel have been omitted too.

One of these passages occurs when Nancy and Tarrant, while their marriage is still secret, discuss what happened at Teignmouth. The omitted section reveals the depth of Nancy's sense

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of guilt, but it is also the only instance in the novel which shows a more tender aspect of Tarrant's otherwise rather boorish character:

"But will you never think ill of me?"

She whispered the words, close-clinging.

"I should be a contemptible sort of brute."

"No. I ought to have – . If we had spoken of our love to each other, and waited."

"A very proper twelvemonth's engagement, – meetings at five o'clock tea, – fifty thousand love-letters, – and all that kind of thing. Oh, we chose a better way. Our wedding was among the leaves and flowers. You remember the glow of evening sunlight between the red pine and the silver birch? I hope that place may remain as it is all our lives; we will go there –"

"Never! Never ask me to go there. I want to forget – I hope some day I may forget."

“If you hope so, then I will hope the same.” (A139:E153)

The longest and most conspicuous deletion the American editor chose to make is one of almost three pages dealing with the event at Teignmouth, but also the disclosure of Nancy's pregnancy. The dialogue takes place at Tarrant's rooms, which Nancy secretly visits at times. The censored part begins after Nancy has told her husband, in a rather roundabout way, that she is expecting a baby. This piece of news makes “him wish again that he had been either more or less a man of honour down at Teignmouth” (A164:E181). The dialogue also reveals Nancy's uneasiness about her situation and her fear of being seen visiting a bachelor's flat. Irritated at her preoccupation with a mere question of etiquette, Tarrant tells her that she “must get rid of that provincialism” and that they “have outgrown those ancestral prejudices... We have nothing to do with Mrs. Grundy's morals” (E182-83). Nancy is not convinced, and therefore it is perhaps not surprising that the editor thought it wiser not to pass on Tarrant's scornful attitude to the necessity of observing proprieties to the young, prospective American readers.

Even if Nancy is now married, allusions to her past experience and present condition obviously had better be left out. Towards the end of this long deletion the author outlines her difficult situation: “Before she could outlive the shock of passion which seemed at once to destroy and to re-create her, she was confronted with the second supreme crisis of woman's existence – its natural effects complicated with the trials of her peculiar position” (183).

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Pregnancy is not treated, even in the original edition, as the completely natural effect it is said to be. When mentioned, it is a condition which calls for unfinished sentences and circumlocutional delicacy in language. In the American edition, the following lines have simply been cut out: “With passion they had done; the enduring tenderness of a reasonable love must now unite them, were they to be united at all. And to give such love a chance of growing in him, Tarrant felt that he must lose sight of Nancy until her child was born” (A181:E201). This was apparently a much too straightforward way of presenting the pregnancy, which the editor had made such an effort to conceal from the American readers.

Not even the euphemism about Ada Peachey's pregnancy was allowed to pass into the American edition: “A medical man shortly called, and Ada, not without secret disgust, smilingly made known to her husband that she must now be very careful of her health” (A348:E383). Apparently, the veneration in which Family, Marriage and Motherhood was held did not extend to the natural process by which these institutions were perpetuated.

#### *Anti-marriage material*

Criticism of one of these cornerstones of society, conventional marriage, permeates the novel. The subplot of the Peachey's infernal marriage and the unhappy marriage of Nancy's parents, which ended in divorce, are parts of this criticism, but the most severe censure against marriage is expressed by Tarrant, the unwilling husband. The anti-marriage message could therefore not be expunged from *Jubilee*, but the editor obviously found it necessary to reduce the peaks of Tarrant's eloquent railings against marriage in three places. One may imagine the determination with which he cut Tarrant's indecorous definition of this worthy institution: “Hugger-mugger marriage is a defilement and a curse. We know it from the experience of the world at large, – which is perhaps more brutalised by marriage than by anything else” (A375:E411). Equally strong is Tarrant's condemnation of the middle-class home, which is also omitted: “They are factories of quarrel and hate – those respectable, brass-curtain-roddeed sties - they are full of things that won't bear mentioning” (A374:E410).

Bearing in mind the editor's objections to any description of physical married life, it is

only logical that the following comment on the danger of constant matrimonial intimacy, with its sexual allusions, was left out: “The common practice of man and wife occupying the same

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room is monstrous, gross; it’s astounding that women of any sensitiveness endure it. In fact, their sensitiveness is destroyed” (A162:E178). In this case, the deletions do less damage to the characterization – since we know Tarrant’s views on marriage so well already – than to the author’s style and language.

### *Vocabulary*

There is another kind of blue-pencilling, that of single words and half sentences, which affects the author’s diction. Here, the editor’s zeal appears overfastidious and sometimes ridiculous. First of all, all words and phrases connected with prostitution have been deleted. The American ostrich-like attitude towards this profession led to consistent omission of all hints at this social phenomenon. When Ada Peachey’s misdirected jealousy finds vent “in the language of the gutter and the brothel” (A224:E248) the last words of that sentence are cut as are her references to “the female spawn of Whitechapel” (A229:E253) and “the swell women in Piccadilly Circus” (A224:E248).

Therefore, the American reading public was also spared the true nature of Fanny French’s stay abroad. On her return “[s]he was dressed with tawdry extravagance, wore a mass of false yellow hair, had her eyebrows dyed black, – piquant contrast, – and her cheeks and lips richly carmined” (A349:E383). No reader could have any doubts about the fact that Fanny, after having been seduced and abandoned by a fashionable rogue, had prostituted herself. Therefore, this passage, Fanny’s secretiveness about the cause of her ill health, and the authorial comment that “the nature of her malady she did not specify,” which suggests a venereal disease, are deleted (A349:E383).

Sometimes the American editor becomes pedantic in his eagerness to avoid words with the slightest sexual connotation even if they are used in a purely neutral, non-sexual context. When Ada presents herself at breakfast in a dressing-gown and “her neck was bare almost to the bosom,” the editor thinks it is sufficient to let the readers know that “her neck was bare” (A3:E3). In the same way the language is softened when her sisters try to stop Ada’s fit of rage after her husband’s escape by drenching her in water and strip her “stark naked” and put her to bed (A229:E253). In whatever context, nakedness, or even the uncovering of body parts, were improper subjects.

There is a second example of how the editor not only cut but actually changed the text. In a conversation with Mrs Damerel, Crewe’s “sense of sexual predominance awoke in him”

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(A320:E352) and, although the word “sexual” is used in a neutral context, the editor found it safer to replace it with “masculine” in the American edition. The motives for these deletions and changes may sometimes be divined, but this is not always the case, when seemingly haphazard cuts have been made for obscure reasons. Although expressions and acts of violence are common in the Peachey household, the editor objects when Fanny says about Ada that “I wish Arthur would wring her scraggy neck” (A351:E386). Fanny’s utterance may not be ladylike, but the deletion of it fails to make sense since the author makes a point of the fact that Fanny is not a lady, in spite of her pretensions and superficial veneer. The consequence of even short deletions like these, with the seemingly harmless purpose of glossing over obtrusive words and expressions, is nevertheless detrimental to the overall impression of the novel, flattening the

author's style, softening his temperament.

### *Anti-American material*

There is one deletion which shows that the bigoted touchiness was not confined to sexual matters and criticism of marriage and family life. Evidently, the editorial policy also denied an author who found fault with the American nation full freedom of expression. Therefore, when after his return Tarrant tells a friend of his experience, he is muzzled in the American edition:

“The old Adam is stronger than ever in me,” he pursued. “If I were condemned for life to the United States, I should go mad, and perish in an attempt to swim the Atlantic.”

“Then why did you stay so long?”

“I could have stayed with advantage even longer. It's something to have studied with tolerable thoroughness the most hateful form of society yet developed. I saw it at first as a man does who is living at his ease; at last, as a poor devil who is thankful for the institution of free lunches. I went first-class, and I came back as a steerage passenger. It has been a year well spent.” (A303:E334)

No doubt, these are harsh words, and the editor might have felt that he acted in a true patriotic spirit when he spared his compatriots Tarrant's outburst. Unfortunately, the passage is crucial for a fuller understanding of Tarrant since it is the only information we get about his time abroad. Without it, we might, like Nancy, imagine his stay in America and the Bahamas as a long holiday full of leisure and adventures. But Tarrant suffered too; poetic justice is done, and

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accordingly, it is possible for us to judge the runaway husband somewhat less severely.

### *Conclusion*

The bowdlerisation of *Jubilee* affects characterization and diction alike. Nancy, deprived of the expressions of her passionate nature and her deep sense of guilt, becomes a less complicated character, whose acceptance of her erring husband seems even less understandable than in the English edition. In the same way, Tarrant's sweet remembrances of their “wedding,” his efforts to assuage Nancy's qualms about what happened at Teignmouth and the fact that he suffered, and not only enjoyed himself, during his stay in America, would have softened the impression of him as a mere egotistical brute. The inter-play between the two protagonists loses in subtlety, and the reader's understanding of the motives for their reunion becomes less clear.

To a lesser degree the same is true about the relationship between Horace and Fanny, a pendant to that of Nancy and Tarrant in its theme of betrayal and forgiveness. The deleted episode of Horace's debauchery explains the depth of his feelings for Fanny and his readiness to accept her, diseased and fallen as she is, as his wife.

No doubt, Gissing's penetrating depiction of human psychology and motives of behaviour is curtailed when his characters are denied their full range of emotions like sexual feelings, temperamental outbursts, expressions of vulgarity, desperation and debauchery. In the same way, the censored material shows that the American editor has succeeded, to some extent, in his intention of taming the author, softening his language and style which as a consequence lose in austerity, exactness and temperament.

The nature of the 24 cuts described here, as well as the relatively few pages they comprise,

speak against a purpose of mere shortening of the text. Instead, the consistent deletions of sexually charged sentences, words that allude to sexual activities or the naked body, passages that could be conceived as anti-marriage or anti-American propaganda reflect the bigoted literary climate and the editor's somewhat desperate attempts at expurgating Gissing's novel in order to adjust it to a reading public presumed to be much more prudish and in need of moral supervision than its English counterpart. That this anonymous editor was not alone in his presumptions is shown by an editorial letter to Thomas Hardy who had to accept extensive deletions when his *Jude the Obscure* was serialized in *Harper's* in 1894:

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My objections are based on purism (not mine, but our readers'), which is undoubtedly more rigid here than in England. Our rule is that the MAGAZINE must contain nothing which could not be read aloud in any family circle... You will see for yourself our difficulty, and we fully appreciate the annoyance you must feel at being called upon to modify work conscientiously done, and which is best as it left your hands, from an artist's point of view.<sup>6</sup>

To my knowledge, no such correspondence has survived concerning Gissing and *Jubilee*. Nor is there any reference to the American edition in his diary or in his letters of the period, as is the case of the preceding and the following novels (*The Odd Women* and *The Whirlpool*). Gissing might, of course, like Hardy at the same time, have felt compelled to comply with the editor's wishes in order to earn a few pounds and have his novel published in America. In 1899, however, in a letter to Pinker, Gissing expressed his concern about unauthorized foreign editions of his work:

Their suggestion is the most ridiculous I ever heard. As if I should allow a book to be published without seeing proofs! For them, no doubt, such a proceeding would be vastly convenient, but I am not at all inclined to save them a few dollars at the expense of my reputation.<sup>7</sup>

This is, of course, no proof that Gissing condoned the bowdlerisation of *Jubilee*. In fact, we know that Gissing did not always act up to his convictions: in 1901 the American edition of *Our Friend the Charlatan* was published without his seeing the proofs.<sup>8</sup> Still, his unwillingness to take any other view than the artist's and the absence of authorial and editorial comments about the American *Jubilee* seem to indicate the possibility that he simply did not know about it. No doubt, the novel is best as it left the author's hands; unfortunately the American editor's inept work will continue to detract from the value of it, since his edition is still reprinted and widely available in both America and Europe.

<sup>1</sup>Letter from George Gissing to Thomas Hardy, 30 June 1886, *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, eds. Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas (Athens: Ohio UP, 1992), Vol. III, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>George Gissing, "The Place of Realism in Fiction"; rpt in *George Gissing on Fiction*, eds. Jacob and Cynthia Korg (London: Enitharmon Press, 1978), p. 86.

<sup>3</sup>In this study I have used the edition of Dover Publications, New York, 1982, which is an unabridged reprint of the first American edition, published by D. Appleton, 1895, and compared it with the Harvester edition of 1976. In the following the page references are given to these

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editions, where the American edition, from which text has been deleted, is denoted A and the English edition, with the original text, is denoted E.

<sup>4</sup>Larzer Ziff, *The American 1890s. Life and Times of a Lost Generation* (New York: Viking, 1966), pp. 9-10.

<sup>5</sup>The blue-pencilling of this passage was first pointed out in Christina Sjöholm, “*The Vice of Wedlock.*” *The Theme of Marriage in George Gissing’s Novels*, dissertation, Uppsala University, 1994. Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Studia Anglistica Upsaliensia 85 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994), p. 88n.

<sup>6</sup>Letter from Henry Mills Alden to Thomas Hardy, 1894, quoted in Ziff, p. 123.

<sup>7</sup>Letter from George Gissing to James B. Pinker, 20 June 1899, *Collected Letters*, vol. VII, p. 356.

<sup>8</sup>*Collected Letters*, Vol. 8, p. 137n.

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#### Gissing’s Introduction to the Autograph Edition of “David Copperfield”

[It is well known that Gissing wrote two introductions to *David Copperfield* that were equally ill-fated. The one he contributed to Methuen’s Rochester Edition was thought for eighty years to have been lost altogether after the publisher abruptly decided to discontinue the edition. Gissing had just corrected the proofs when he heard the news from his agent William Morris Colles. In 1980 Richard Dunn discovered the proofs at Dickens House and promptly published them in the *Dickensian* for Spring 1981 with a portrait of Gissing. There the text, unreprinted since, can be found. The fate of the other introduction, commissioned by the New York publisher George Sproul for his Autograph Edition of Dickens’s works, has been related in this writer’s *Gissing’s Writings on Dickens* (1969; reprinted 1971) and again, piecemeal, in Volume 9 of Gissing’s *Collected Letters*. In early 1903 Sproul did publish the book in three fat volumes with the introduction duly signed in the author’s hand. But as Sproul went bankrupt very shortly afterwards, the 300 sets that had been printed were not disposed of before he went out of business. Nor were they all bound. Evidence of this became public in America in the last ten years or so. The book is now extremely scarce and very few people have had a chance of reading Gissing’s introduction to it. Hence the first reprint of it that we offer below. Related material – an essay on Gissing’s two introductions to *David Copperfield* viewed as a *Bildungsroman* – is listed under “Recent Publications.” – Ed.]

Dickens was thirty-seven years old, midway in the long triumph of his career, and at the ripest moment of his genius, when he sat down to write “David Copperfield.” It is the time of life when a man becomes aware that he is no longer youthful, when he turns with a sense of strangeness to his childhood, seeing it detached, remote. In Dickens’s case, so remarkable was

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the contrast between his early experience of life and the position he had now attained, that he might well gaze backwards more frequently than other men. Already he had committed to writing his memories of hardship and sorrow endured when he was a little lad, pages which he half purposed to extend into an autobiography; but that book, had he completed it, would only have seen the light after his death. When he confided the fragment to his friend Forster, it was with the assurance that he had never told this story to any living person, such a sense of pain and shame did it stir within him. Whilst planning the novel which was to succeed “*Dombey and*



Son," he saw an opportunity for using those reminiscences in a way which had not yet occurred to him. We know that it was Goethe's habit to shape into poetry a trouble which had grown too burdensome; the poem written, his sufferings were at an end. Even thus did it come to pass with Dickens. What had been only a source of distressful emotion was no sooner seen as the material of art than it lost all its bitterness; the book in which, under a thin disguise, he told the world how poor and wretched was his lot in childhood, proved to be that which, of all his novels, he wrote with most enjoyment, and which ever remained his favorite.

When Forster pointed out to him that the initials of David Copperfield were those of Charles Dickens reversed, he was surprised and delighted. After so long shrinking, with what has been judged over-sensitiveness, from the thought of all he had seen and undergone in squalid London – the miserable lodging, the debtors' prison, the blacking warehouse – at a time when he ought to have been preparing for life in school and playground, the great writer found it his joy to be identified with that poor little half-starved toiler at Murdstone and Grinby's, whose trials excited interest and sympathy wherever English books were read. One has no means of judging how far Dickens intended to exhibit in the grown-up Copperfield his own character; assuredly he saw something of himself in the young man who so vigorously "hewed at trees in the forest of difficulty;" who mastered short-hand; who timidly tried his hand at authorship, and so soon achieved brilliant success; but here is no such warm and living portraiture as holds us in the preceding chapters. We know the type of autobiographical novel in which the supposed narrator is through and through the author himself, and stands from beginning to end of the book as its central figure. Such novels are "Jane Eyre" and "Villette," whose heroines, differing only in non-essentials, utter with lyrical passion the mind and heart of

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the writer. Charlotte Brontë worked with full command of her resources only in the autobiographical form; Dickens, on the other hand, turned to it almost by accident, and rather for the sake of varying his method than because he felt in it a superior fitness. Obviously, as the presumed author of the book, Copperfield should be credited with all the literary power, all the humor and observation, that Dickens himself possessed; yet who is quite convinced that such gifts had fallen to the husband of Dora, the friend of Micawber? Grown-up and independent, he is no longer (in the opening words of the story) the hero of his own life; we see more clearly, and think more about, the people with whom he is connected than him who speaks. Just as Thomas Traddles, in his capacity of legal adviser and literary agent to Copperfield, suggests John Forster, yet is a totally different being, so does David himself hint at the life and personality of Dickens as man and author, but only in the remotest way.

In "Pendennis" Thackeray produced what may fairly be called a novel of literary life. No such purpose ever entered the mind of Dickens, who – though he was read by people of all degrees – invariably chose a subject attractive even to the least intelligent; the world of journalists and authors, well as he knew it, never appeared to him in the light of material for his art. None the less may we see in the picture of David's early life a study of the heart and mind of one born to be an imaginative writer. The child's keen faculty of observation, his flashes of intuitive knowledge, his picture-making vision, are significantly brought before us, and lead up to the story-telling at school, which gives him his first taste of popularity. Admirable in its setting of fiction, all this has virtue as autobiography. Running about London streets, there are always numberless children whom sheer necessity makes little men and women in knowledge and resource; but they are mute, all the strangeness and the misery of their young lives passes untold. It was among these waifs and strays that Charles Dickens stored up the memories which were to enrich his work as a writer, and of which he makes the fullest use in the book before us. For once, there moved amid the throng of the inarticulate a little mortal who was not as the others, who would soon pass from among them, but whose sympathy for those he left behind

would endure as long as he lived and shine in pages which were the world's delight.

"I know enough of the world now," says David, "to have almost lost the capacity of being much surprised by anything, but it is a matter of some surprise to me, even now, that I can have been so easily thrown away at such an age.... It seems wonderful to me that nobody should have made any sign in my behalf. But none was made; and I became, at ten years old, a little laboring

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hind in the service of Murdstone and Grinby." When he wrote those lines, Dickens was of course thinking of his own parents, who looked on with much complacency whilst he underwent a like doom. Yet, when writing this book, it is certain that he had quite lost the painful feeling which so long troubled him; even if we did not know that he came to speak of his father with kindness and even a certain admiration, the fact that the elder Dickens served, in some measure, as a model for Mr. Micawber, would set our minds at ease. For among all the names to which his imagination gave significance, none has a more delightful sound than that of Micawber. And it throws light on the working of Dickens's genius to remind oneself that this, after all, is the most prominent personage in the novel. Mr. Micawber does nothing worth speaking of; he has no particular influence on Copperfield's mind or fortunes; he simply lives, in the way that is natural to him – talks, borrows, writes letters, brews punch – and, so doing, is a friend we would not lose for any reasonable consideration. So is it with all the best of Dickens's creations; their parts in the intrigue is naught; they are not people who act and who change the face of things – that office being assigned, most often, to figures far less alive. One has heard it said (what has one not heard said?) that Mr. Micawber grows monotonous, that he is always expecting something to turn up, always inditing the same kind of epistle, always uttering the same inflated phrases. Why, in other words, he is always himself, and one would like to know how it is proposed to better him! Always himself, I say; and yet there comes the thought of that penultimate chapter where Mr. Peggotty brings from Australia the latest news of his fellow emigrants. We are very ready to believe that Mr. Creakle became a metropolitan magistrate; we lend our gratified assent to the assurance that Uriah Heep shone as a sanctimonious felon behind prison bars; we accept, and attribute to change of climate, the happy transformation of Mrs. Gummidge; but do we really ever accustom ourselves to the thought of Mr. Micawber as a flourishing denizen of Port Middlebay? True, there is his letter in the local newspaper; we admit the hand; but then, this comes after the statement that he "has paid off every obligation he incurred" in England! Well, well, it is the master's way. At the end, only sinners must be shown with their noses against the grindstone; people, whatever their foibles, who have never transgressed human or divine law, and to whom we owe no little wholesome mirth, shall reap their reward in full measure. It was necessary, indeed, to expatriate Mr. Micawber; the most vigorous imagination could not have pictured him in London, or at Canterbury, a debt-paying,

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energetic, prosperous citizen. The life of one in whom we take so close an interest must be rounded happily. And to show Mr. Micawber, genial as ever, though past his prime, still waiting for something to turn up, and likely to wait until the end, would have been inconsistent with Dickens's art.

For this art, at its best, is not the art of caricature. Taking up the humorous suggestions of life, Dickens makes the most of them, extracts from them all that they can yield for mirth and ease of heart, guided ever and restrained by what may be called the law of natural idealism. Mr. Micawber, as we know him, never existed in the flesh; but there is no reason in nature why he should not. On the other hand, there *is* a law of nature which renders it impossible that such a man should wax old amid squalid circumstance, and still retain the virtuous aspect of his

weaknesses; and Dickens knew this. He therefore chooses, instead of an impossibility which could amuse and please only the unreflecting, an improbability at which the judicious may smile. Had I space, this conscientiousness of art might be illustrated by many examples from the pages which Dickens's inconsiderate critics are wont to call inartistic. He errs, indeed, and at times grossly; but never, perhaps, in regard to the finest creations of his humor. We have only to understand and to concede the laws which governed his imagination at its work.

Less than justice, I think, has commonly been done to Mrs. Micawber, who is so like the great man himself, yet differs from him in ways which demanded much subtlety of perception and of treatment. Compare her talk with that of her husband; it is Micawberese translated into the feminine; and Dickens, though he goes so far astray in the talk of women meant to be intelligent and graceful, can reproduce with wonderful fidelity the feminine note when ridiculous or vulgar. The latter term no one could apply to good Mrs. Micawber, but it has to be admitted that she is less than wise, and in imitating her spouse's rotundity of speech, with the addition of characteristics quite her own, she shapes a language at once natural and mirth-compelling. Fiction has often dealt with the humors of impecuniosity, but, so far as I can remember, Dickens alone ventures upon the humorous presentment of a wife beset by duns and bailiffs. Wonderfully has he succeeded in enlisting our sympathies for Mrs. Micawber; act and speak as absurdly as she may, she never loses our liking, and a certain respect for her qualities as wife and mother. In an earlier book Dickens sketched the impecunious young man who is supported by a buoyant temper, and Dick Swiveller remains a type. The Micawbers manifest a

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great advance in art, as well as in knowledge of human nature. One might quote any number of instances from their speech and behavior, where a trait of which the universal truth is at once recognized serves to emphasize the character or the experience of this delightful couple. Take only a line or two from that scene where David makes known to the Micawbers the pecuniary loss just suffered by his aunt. "I cannot express how extremely delighted they both were by this idea of my aunt's in difficulties and how comfortable and friendly it made them." Would it be possible to touch a human failing more distinctly, yet to show it in a more amusing light?

The book in which the greatest of French novelists relates the career of a young man launched upon the world of letters in Paris, bears a significant title; it is called "Illusions Perdues." To the hero of that story, the literary life means not only struggle and suffering, but humiliation, defeat, disgrace. Comparing with this the novels of Thackeray and Dickens which have a penman for protagonist we are led to reflect upon certain characteristics of English life and of English art. "David Copperfield" and "Pendennis," vastly as they differ in many other respects, are alike in their spirit of optimism; from the first we know that all will go well with our young adventurers; the difficulties in their way are anything but insuperable; very quickly indeed do we find both David and Arthur on the best of terms with publishers and public, enjoying abundant leisure and a most satisfactory income. Thus must it needs have been; for not only were our great novelists well aware that English readers would turn away from a picture of literary life on its unsuccessful side, but they themselves had no inclination to deal with so depressing a subject. To their minds, an unhappy novel was a contradiction in terms; they saw in fiction the solace of life. Moreover, they understood, and sympathized with, that temper in their readers which demanded that young heroes of the pen, no less than heroes of any other kind, should fall in love with virtuous young ladies, and achieve domestic bliss. The sentimental experiences of a Lucien de Rubempré were not for an English drawing-room table. I am speaking, to be sure, of a day gone by. Notable changes have come over the English public since "Copperfield" and "Pendennis" were written, but at that time there was no hesitating on this particular subject. Arthur Pendennis might sow his wild oats, but he did it in a very gentlemanly way; we have hardly time to fear on Fanny Bolton's account before all the peril is handsomely

over. Was it for nothing that the angelic ladies of Fair Oaks hovered ever in the background? As for David Copperfield, what, pray, would the reading multitude have said, had it been *he* who

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brought misery to the house on the sands at Yarmouth? No; Arthur must be forgiven his follies, and settle down with Laura, a prosperous gentleman; David shall have his "unsubstantial, happy, foolish time," whilst he woos Dora, shall go through domestic trials which leave not a wrinkle on his forehead – was ever foolish marriage such a source of delight? – and in the end shall be left the faultless husband of an ideal wife; with many children about him. It is all very enjoyable, very soothing. And, because the writers are men of genius, it is all richly human.

In the nature of things, Dickens's best-loved book must be a glorification of the domestic virtues. Through all his work sounds, more or less audibly, this gracious note, familiar and pleasant to an English ear as that of village bells; but in "David Copperfield" the peace and the sanctity of home are ever before one's mind, either as the result of deliberate contrast, or by delightful picturing. The pathos of David's childhood arises from his homelessness; the weak young mother, and the foolish little wife, are each, in turn, responsible for his lack of that happiness which they had it in their power to bestow; Betsy Trotwood herself has suffered from domestic treachery, and is all the more bent on enriching with kindness her forsaken little nephew. The name of Peggotty is redolent of homely worth; David's nurse offers a shining example of "that constant service of the antique world," which even in Dickens's day was becoming a rare thing, and now scarce exists save in memory; and the Yarmouth household glows with fireside comfort, Mrs. Gummidge's croak serving merely to heighten the effect of contentment and goodness. Then there is Traddles, with his long fidelity to the dearest girl in the world, "one of ten, down in Devonshire;" Traddles of the wandering thoughts and the rebellious hair, who not only weds his love but is seen at last, by dint of sterling qualities, on his way to fortune. Shall we forget the poor usher, Mr. Mell, whose affection gives a semblance of home to the alms-house where his mother has found refuge? Amid all this we have the selfishness of Steerforth, the wrong-doing of his victim, the turbulence of Rosa Dartle, the rascality of Littimer – all forces tending to destroy the domestic ideal; whereto may be added Uriah Heep and his parent, illustrations of vice doing homage to the virtue with which we are concerned. But in "David Copperfield" there are no very dark pages; its moments of sadness are very quickly relieved; even in the early parts of the book, squalor and villainy, such as abound in most of the novels, are barely touched upon; the author found himself in that tranquil mood which comes of musing upon sorrows long gone by, and preserved throughout the genial tenor

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of his thoughts. Even David's mistaken marriage is saved from the tragic possibility which waits upon all such errors; instead of the wretchedness and disaster one might well have looked for in circumstances so menacing, there is set before us one of the sweetest, tenderest and most exhilarating bits of domestic comedy to be found in our literature. Happily, the husband is a humorist; happily the wife dies very soon; only given these conditions, could so delicate a bit of fantasy hold together at all, possess that tangibility which is essential to its charm. These chapters contain, perhaps, the happiest writing in all Dickens's work; here sentiment never drops to sentimentality; the humor, which is his very gentlest, never loses itself in the spirit of farce. The same might be said of other pages in his novels, but the peculiar mellowness of this book, its sunny outlook over life, as though in a pause amid cares and indignations, give it a special color to one's thoughts. Open the volume, by chance, at a passage of Dora's housekeeping; will it seem to you easy to exaggerate the praise of Dickens?

I know that the critic will have his say; he must needs touch upon defects long ago noted,

blemishes undeniable. Dickens's contemporaries were too apt to praise him for what in truth are the weakest parts of his work; posterity has been inclined to over-insist upon these faults. The central incident of "Copperfield" is the ruin wrought by Steerforth; to this did the writer work up, and, at the time, it was commonly regarded as his greatest success in pathos, in tragedy. One must admit that in Emily's story there is very little of either. The heroine herself is a mere flitting phantasm of unripe girlhood, her passions and woes are never realized. We do not believe in Steerforth's rascality; we find it impossible to picture the old boatman wandering about Europe in search of his niece; and things become only more unreal when Emily is discovered in a London garret, and Copperfield over-hears that fantastic dialogue between her and Rosa Dartle. Why dwell on these pages? Dickens had a weakness for very crude melodrama; we grant it: we have long since agreed to pass that over, or, if we touch upon it, to do so merely that the master's failing may throw into higher relief his splendid power. In the same way one might just allude to the young wife of Dr. Strong, and her cousin Jack Maldon. Very pale, this picture of goodness and duty at strife with passion. Dickens has no footing on such ground; we may wish that he had never felt it necessary to turn that way – and there an end.

One has heard it mentioned as a strange thing that Dickens could believe with all his heart in the reality of persons and of circumstances which, to his serious readers, often carry no

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conviction whatever. A general, and sufficient, answer to such a remark would be that the thought of the artist creates its own world, governed by laws of imaginative vision, which, in any particular instance, may or may not correspond with the law of illusion in other minds. For my own part, however, I should say that Dickens by no means always saw in the light of reality those figures which he strives to make real to the reader. He distressed himself all but to illness over his heroine of "The Old Curiosity Shop," a creation alive to him, if ever any was; you, on the other hand, find it impossible to discover a single link with humanity in the picture of Little Nell; but remember that the crusty old editor of *The Edinburgh Review* shed tears of sympathy with the novelist. The case of little Em'ly, I take it, is different; here the author was subject to no such complete illusion; it is one of those instances in which he deliberately set himself to produce a "situation" strong in pathetic interest. Who, for a moment, will maintain that Dickens saw old Peggotty's niece as clearly as he beheld Mrs. Gummidge? The point is too obvious for dwelling upon; better worth while is it to remind ourselves that, however insubstantial the figure, the background and accessories are almost always thoroughly convincing; this makes the distinction between Dickens on his lower level and the work of everyday story-tellers. No novelist ever made a bolder – not to say a more reckless – use of coincidence than is seen in the case of Steerforth's death; but few, at the same time, have written such pages of vivid truth as those describing the coach-journey in the storm from London to Yarmouth, the tempest on the shore, and the night of watching at the inn. We forget the utter impossibility of a certain incident, absorbed as we are in the force of a masterly narrative. Thus it is throughout; Dickens's truth always triumphs over his conventionalities or fantastic friskings. And sometimes it is a very large truth indeed. Turn to Chapter Fifty-nine, and read of Copperfield's experiences when, after a long absence from England, he arrives in London, and seeks for Traddles. You may, if you please, view Traddles's marriage as a delightful bit of absurdity; but what of the impression produced on Copperfield's mind by the old inn, and the old waiter, and the old guests – the atmosphere of prescription and conservatism which plunges him into such amusing discouragement when he thinks of Traddles struggling for a livelihood? Here are history and philosophy, lurking in a page of merry fiction.

David tells us (and it is Dickens who speaks) that the reading of his childhood lay among the old English novelists; his spirit was nurtured on books such as "Tom Jones" and "Roderick

Random.” One compares the work before us with those old masterpieces. Less virile – it will be said. Nay, let us say rather, less coarse, depicting a world greatly more gentle, but for all that every bit as human. The joys, griefs, aspirations of “David Copperfield” are those of honest and homely folk in mid-Victorian England. The true predecessor of Dickens in a ruder century was he who wrote “The Vicar of Wakefield.” Goldsmith, if you will, makes a less robust figure than Fielding or Smollett, but which has left the sweeter memory? Happy our great writer of the Victorian time, in that he, too, was led by his genius on cleanly paths and found mirth only in things of good report.

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Travel and Writing  
George Gissing’s Ideological Journey in Italy

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[The following is a translation of an article entitled “Viaggio e scrittura. Il tragitto ideologico di George Gissing in Italia,” which appeared in *Tracce*, Trimestrale di Ricerca letteraria, Edizioni Tracce, Pescara, Anno XIII, no. 35-36, June-September 1994, pp. 56-60. For assistance with the translation, thanks are due to Dr. Renzo D’Aguillo and to Dr. Michael Cronin.]

During the nineteenth century, following in the footsteps of those who had already travelled the paths of history to arrive at its infancy and trace its memory, numerous intellectuals/travellers crossed the seas and travelled unknown paths to visit the deep south of Italy: Magna Graecia. Many of them felt almost obliged to offer a written testimony of their movements, as required by the custom of the period, while as many others made their journey with the specific aim of writing. This latter is the case with George Gissing on the threshold of the twentieth century.

Gissing’s life story could be said to coincide with his writing, because of a kind of self-fictionalising attitude on his part, which is completely dedicated to the representation of a number of fixed themes. *By the Ionian Sea* (1901) is the only travel book that Gissing wrote and inherent in it is his intention to be part of a trend which, in the last century, involved a considerable number of writers. While never really in sympathy with the fashions of his time,

Gissing was, nevertheless, considerably attracted by the *rêverie* suggested by the travellers/intellectuals of the period, to such a point that, on the eve of every journey he felt irremediably impatient of his place of origin, beginning to imagine himself already launched abroad (in Italy and Greece or in Paris), attracted by the historic beauty of the places and by the ideal of the cosmopolitan intellectual. The day-dreamer’s fancy and the invention of an imaginary world, a romance, in which to take refuge, set in motion the mechanism of an escape from reality by means of two methods: the journey as a physical escape and the journey as a spiritual escape, the latter also taking on an ideological-cultural value. The journey coincides with two types of experience: one is that of an escape from the world in which one lives while the second is expressly related to artistic activity in which there is an implicit exigency of recording one’s sensations, impressions and opinions throughout the journey. One of the most important things

to bear in mind in studying this great minor writer is that Gissing wrote in order to be able to travel (that is, the money he received was limited, was supposed to help him realise his dream of visiting Magna Graecia) and he travelled to write. What is more, in his position as portrayer and as an opponent of industrial progress, Gissing seems to be one of the most truthful travellers and one of the most attached to the landscape that the history of travel literature has ever seen. Apart from his appreciation of the architectural beauties, or what remains of them, the thing that makes Gissing's sensibility modern is the way in which he describes the landscapes: he is both subjective and objective. Writer *par excellence*, Gissing must undoubtedly be placed among the best of his century, including the already established Joseph Conrad who was his contemporary and whom he discovered a few years before he died thanks to the friendship that both writers had with H. G. Wells.

Gissing's ideological journey becomes the portrayal of a Mediterranean sensibility in contrast with a gloomy British inheritance. The journey, as Gissing still conceived it, was "*il segno di una condizione superiore a quella 'comune'*"<sup>1</sup> [the mark of a condition superior to the 'common' one] united with that high self-esteem which had begun to be typical of the romantic traveller. In this regard, romanticism exercises a great and positive influence on Gissing's art and his personality, and in this one can understand those of his characteristics most related to isolation, to the continual search for something, and to escape (escapism) as a spiritual experience. Escape was supposed to separate the writer from the "wrong world" (England) and permit him to immerse himself in the "ideal world" (Italy).

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The experience of travelling is a "temporal" one. The Mediterranean countries have a historical value because there "every spot of ground gives off as it were an absolute perfume of reminiscences and associations".<sup>2</sup> Reminiscences are to History what associations are to ideas, but the final effect is that of a journey in time across time, that is to say, a temporal experience immersed in atemporality, a dimension in which the ego is separated from present categories to immerse itself in another place and another time. According to the by now tried and tested mechanism by which the experience of the journey results in both a loss and a gain, the gain consists in self-identification, or rather the discovery of one's own identity, and the acquisition of a certain stature, even if only in one's own eyes. The search is therefore for the determination of an identity, which is permitted through liberation from the spatial and temporal restraints to which each of us is subject:

I shall never be able to make myself at home again in England... I work only in the hope of getting away very soon... I am in the wrong world... I am so much more myself, when abroad... My *London* life is in the past. I cannot live in London now, and I think never shall again.<sup>3</sup>

The social and cultural exclusivity of the classics explains in itself the importance of the journeys to Italy. What is more, as John Pemble rightly confirmed in 1987,<sup>4</sup> the travel-book (or travelogue) was, at the end of the last century, associated with literature of political disengagement and protest. Carlyle had already given expression to his pessimism in *Past and Present*, and Hardy, whose classicism is so well integrated in his work, had expressed this sense of History as understood in this "preferential" way. In the contrast between past and present human values remain in the past and with them the positiveness of existence. Italy, representing the classics and the past, is part of an ideological opposition, a moral topography, which functions in this way:

Ancient

vs

Modern

Imagination	vs	Reality
Italy	vs	England

The as yet un-industrialised Italy as opposed to industrialised England. Lost childhood (both historical and psychological), therefore innocence versus a reality lacking in inspiration and edifying values. The genre of travel-writing often presents this type of ideological-spiritual journey. Travelling “outside” (abroad) also means travelling “inside” and travelling in space

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always means travelling in time. The Gissing journey presents in an exemplary manner this space-time link between the imaginary and the realistic in order to fuse the sense of History and the sense of landscape, the latter understood as an aesthetic object but also as an interior quality, related to conscience. The features of the landscape, taking on a semantic value, reproduce themselves in the mind (which is also a place) and by means of sinesthetic perception, are represented in the travel text. The landscape as an interior place separates itself from the sense of time, turning into picture, representation. Awareness of landscape, which is somewhat new, given that we only begin to come across it between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, thanks also to the increase in travel writing, becomes manifest in the language which can be semiologically analysed and is therefore a means of introduction to the consciousness of the narrator. The descriptive parts of *By the Ionian Sea* have a spatial quality which frees the author from the sense of time and which allows the traveller/observer to make his own ego objective, giving it up to the flow of transit. It is the transit which in fact guides the traveller, who becomes more aware of himself as spectator and observer of the world that he is passing through and, at the same time, objective and subjective elements converge in the descriptions so that one reveals its foundation in the other. Objectivity is seen through subjectivity and vice versa. As a stranger to the places that he passes through during his journey, Gissing explores a world which appears to him at times correspondent to a reality lacking in cultural interest and at times the happy result of his classical imagination. From the close of the book one can gather a sense of full ideological-spiritual realisation “for him who cannot shape his life as he will”:

I wished it were mine to wander endlessly amid the silence of the ancient world, to-day and all its sounds forgotten.<sup>5</sup>

Living in the past means escaping from time, and time can also be avoided by crossing a space. In his endless wandering we can identify his need to escape from the present world to avoid suffering, social defeat and, ideally, death.

<sup>1</sup>Eric J. Leed, *La mente del viaggiatore*, Bologna: Il Mulino (1992), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Letter to his sister Margaret, 16 April 1882, *Collected Letters*, Vol. II, p. 79.

<sup>3</sup>Letter to Eduard Bertz, 22 June 1890, *Collected Letters*, Vol. IV, p. 226.

<sup>4</sup>John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1987).

<sup>5</sup>*By the Ionian Sea*, London: Chapman & Hall (1901), p. 168.

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## Gissing and the Betjeman Circle

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London

One could be forgiven for thinking that George Gissing would be the kind of Victorian who would hold a particular appeal for that admirer and promoter of lesser known aspects of Victorian culture, John Betjeman. A trawl through the poems and the recently published volumes of his letters, *Volume One: 1926 to 1951* (1994) and *Volume Two: 1951 to 1984* (1995), yields only one facetious reference to Gissing (quoted below). Nor did an enquiry made to the editor of the letters, Candida Lycett Green, Betjeman's daughter, elicit any recollected observation. "JB often tried things on me. Not Gissing though. I'm sorry." Yet if Betjeman never articulated any admiration for Gissing, members of his circle did. Moreover it was partly thanks to Betjeman that the Gissing revival – *the* revival before the revival – of the 1940s occurred.

One of Betjeman's literary friends was the South African-born poet and novelist William Plomer. His *The Case is Altered* (1932), depicted the inhabitants of a seedy London boarding-house in a study of communal claustrophobia with a strong flavour of Gissing permeating it. For example, the opening:

They smell [these boarding-houses] of the past, stale cooking, thwarted hopes, and all the horrors of life at its worst in the bourgeois backwaters of Victorian England. Built at a time when money was plentiful and national arrogance on the increase, these houses reflect the dullness and vulgarity of the builders.

It was Plomer who opened the Gissing Exhibition at the National Book League on the 23 July 1971 arranged by Pierre Coustillas and John Spiers. He began his remarks like this:

It is for me an interesting coincidence that I happen to have been born in the year [1903] when Gissing died. In each generation since his death there have been discoverers or rediscoverers of Gissing, and I was among those who read him and tried to draw some attention to him in the Forties; but there can never have been so splendid a rediscovery as the one set out here today.

By "tried to draw some attention to him" Plomer is referring to radio broadcasts and reissues of novels by Gissing he introduced in the 1940s. *A Life's Morning* appeared from Home and Van Thal in 1947 with an introduction by Plomer, and in 1948 from Watergate Classics

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came *The Whirlpool* with an introduction by Myfanwy Evans and *In the Year of Jubilee* with an introduction by Plomer.

Herbert ("Bertie") Van Thal, who later became a literary agent, was a great resurrector of neglected late Victorian and early 20th century novels. He edited the Doughty Library for Anthony Blond in the 1960s in which *The Odd Women* was reprinted with an introduction by Frank Swinnerton. This was followed by the Landmark Library published by Chatto and Windus, in which Plomer's novel mentioned above was reissued. Home and Van Thal also published a series of books on the English novelists in which a volume on Gissing by Myfanwy Evans was announced as forthcoming, but it never appeared.

Watergate Classics was an imprint belonging to Sidgwick and Jackson. The general editor

of the series, it now emerges from Mrs. Lycett Green's volumes, was John Betjeman. He had been a friend since undergraduate Oxford days before the war of James Knapp-Fisher, the chairman of Sidgwick and Jackson.

[Knapp-Fisher, writes Mrs. Lycett Green] was a tall bald man of great good humour and charisma, who lent us two Holman Hunt paintings, one of an amaryllis, the other of a girl holding an urn, which hung in the hall at the Rectory. JB always referred to Sidgwick and Jackson as "the hygienics" because they published a number of extremely dull specialist textbooks on chemistry and medicine. (*Letters Vol. 1*, p. 370)

It was, if one may hazard a guess, the sales of those dull books that funded the uneconomic Gissing reprints. Knapp-Fisher died in 1976 after Sidgwick and Jackson had passed from him in 1970. I used occasionally to see him in the Garrick Club, of which he was a popular member, and can vouch for his charm and bonhomie. Before his time at Sidgwick and Jackson, the firm had absorbed the publishing house of Lawrence and Bullen, whose eponymous partner, Arthur H. Bullen, had been a friend of Gissing and the publisher of some of his later novels. Knapp-Fisher told me that there was a run of all the L. and B. books in the office in Museum Street, including the ones they had published by Gissing whom he wanted to see back in print.

The original idea of Watergate Classics was to reissue Victorian children's books, but because of Gissing's link with the imprint and the enthusiasm of the Betjeman circle for his work he was included. Betjeman was offered a fee of one hundred guineas for editing the first six books. Some of them like George Macdonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* he had at home. In a letter to Knapp-Fisher from The Old Rectory, Wantage, Berkshire on 5 July 1947, Betjeman writes:

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I will bring these books up on Monday.

Goldilegz (old fan of Piper) will be seeing you. Gissing time is kissing time. I won't on any account stand for an abridgement of *Ivanhoe*. Scott is far the greatest novelist we have and the whole point of him is that he is so long-winded. (*Ibid*, p. 417)

Who is "Goldilegz (old fan of Piper)"? And why should "Gissing time" be "kissing time" apart from the fact that it rhymes? (Kissing-time seems to have been something singularly lacking in the life of Gissing.)

All the members of the Betjeman circle were given pet-names that were invariably used by the poet in his letters. Mrs. Lycett Green thoughtfully provides a glossary of them. Goldilegz (also Goldilocks, Goldilox) was Myfanwy Piper. Not only was she an "old fan of (John) Piper" the painter, she was also his wife. I think "old fan of Piper" might have been a slip for "old fan of Gissing." Mrs. Piper had met Betjeman with her husband in 1938, and her golden head of hair crowning her striking looks had made a tremendous impact; she subsequently inspired two of Betjeman's poems, "Myfanwy" and "Myfanwy at Oxford."

While at Oxford Mrs. Piper had graduated in English from St. Hilda's and in the 1930s she became the editor of *Axis*, a journal of French and British *avant-garde* art. After the second world war she became famous as Benjamin Britten's opera-librettist (*The Turn of the Screw*, *Owen Wingrave*, *Death in Venice*). In 1947 Betjeman commissioned her to write an introduction to *The Whirlpool* for the Watergate Classics. In 1948 it appeared above her *nom de jeune fille*, Myfanwy Evans.

This was most appropriate because her introduction – all we now have, sadly, of what was

to have been the Van Thal book – describes how Gissing had been a presence in her life since childhood:

*New Grub Street* and *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* were the books by George Gissing that we had at home – they stood amongst *Unto This Last* and *Sesame and Lilies* (India paper editions), *Sartor Resartus*, *The Poems of Robert Browning* and *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford*...

I read *New Grub Street* along with George Moore's *Esther Waters* at the age of sixteen and after the first luxuriating and indiscriminating acceptance of the drab, forgot all about it until I re-read it years later, when it brought back so vividly my own adolescent exploring of London streets and expressed so forcibly the human apprehension that I had had about the lot of

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mankind in greater London that I settled down to read through the works of George Gissing in a receptively egocentric state of mind.

From the perspective of this acquaintance with Gissing's oeuvre Myfanwy Evans concluded that:

*The Whirlpool* was a cry of despair, of different despair from that in Gissing's previous books, because it contained the first suggestion that the intelligent man might hold in himself, rather than in his situation, the seeds of his own downfall, and the first hint that a denial of the primitive in man's and woman's nature is not a virtue but a failure to face up to reality.

In his remarks at the opening of the exhibition Plomer put it like this:

Generally speaking, his novels are about women and money: more exactly, about the vast difference between his idea of a good woman and his experience of women who fell short of it, and about the frustration caused by lack of money.

These comments on the novels from the members of the Betjeman's circle have a directness that is refreshing in the light of all that has been written since about Gissing's work. They come from people with no academic axe to sharpen to whom Gissing's appeal was to the heart rather than the mind.

\* \* \*

Gissing in D. H. Lawrence's Letters

Jacob Korg

D. H. Lawrence was one of Gissing's readers. The indices to the first two, out of seven, volumes of *Letters of D. H. Lawrence* (Cambridge University Press, 1979 and 1981) lead to a number of references.

To Blanche Jennings, 20 January 1909, Vol. I, p. 107: In reviewing his current reading, Lawrence asks, "Do you remember Gissing's *Henry*

*Ryecroft?* – a tour de force the *Times* calls it – I agree – but Henry Ryecroft says that the essence of art is to express the zest of Life, whatever that may be. Nevertheless, he means something to me, and I accord.”

Lawrence is apparently remembering a review published years before in the *Times Literary Supplement* on 6 February 1903, pp. 38-39. The passage from *Ryecroft* is the well-known

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sentence in Spring XX: “It has occurred to me that one might define Art as: an expression, satisfying and abiding, of the zest of life.”

To May Holbrook, 16 February 1909, Vol. I, p. 116: He asks for reading matter, and adds, in a P.S.: “Nelsons series of 7d modern writers is very good – get H. G. Wells’ *Kipps* – only sevenpence. Then get something of Gissing and the others.”

A footnote observes that the only Gissing novel available in the Nelson series at that time was *The Odd Women*.

To Louie Burrows, 24 July 1910, Vol. I, p. 172: “I don’t know what books to recommend. Go to Nelsons Sevenpenny, and get *Odd Women*.”

To Louie Burrows, 15 December 1910, Vol. I, p. 203: Writing of his longing to see her, “I remind myself of Gissing staring with fierce eyeballs in a pie-shop – & going away more famished.”

Here Lawrence is recalling *Ryecroft*, Spring X, and the description of “a shop which had pies and puddings in the window, puddings and pies kept hot by steam rising through perforated metal. How many a time have I stood there, raging with hunger, unable to purchase even one pennyworth of food!”

To Edward Garnett, 21 January 1912, Vol. I, pp. 353-54: In this letter he observes that *The House of Cobwebs* “is, as Seccombe suggests, chiefly of interest as a footnote to Gissing. G. hasn’t enough energy, enough sanguinity, to capture me. But I esteem him a good deal.”

*The House of Cobwebs*, with Thomas Seccombe’s “Introductory Survey,” was published by the firm of Archibald Constable in 1906.

To Edward Garnett, 12 January 1913, from Lago di Garda, Vol. I, p. 501: Thinking of future plans, he writes: “I’ve no sympathy with starvers, Gissings or Chattertons.”

To Arthur McLeod, 5 March 1913, from Lago di Garda, Vol. I, p. 524: “Do send me one or two books. Is *New Grub St* cheap?”

McLeod could have sent him the sixpenny reprint published by George Newnes in 1910.

To Henry Savage [31 October 1913], Vol. II, p. 96: “Send me a book now and then, will you – any rubbishy thing – it is so grateful. I can read

Phillpotts or Gissing – though I’ve read most of him – or anybody.”

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### Thyrza’s Eastbourne

Sydney Lott  
Eastbourne

Thyrza’s emotional response when she arrived in Eastbourne as escort for little Bessie Bunce was one of sheer delight. It echoed Gissing’s own enthusiasm when he descended into the town after walking the South Downs from Brighton while the tale was forming in his mind. On 27 September 1886, he wrote to his sister Margaret:

I am just back from the Sussex Coast, whither I was driven last Thursday by sheer break-down. I went to Brighton, but found the place impossible; a more hideous & vulgar sea-side town the mind of man has not conceived. So on Friday morning I walked along eastward, – through Rottingdean, Newhaven, Seaford, to Eastbourne. And here at length was rest.

Surely there is no more beautiful watering-place. It is handsomely built, with broad, clean streets, almost all of them avenued with fine, thick chestnuts. I could not discover a dirty thoroughfare, & saw no single blackguard, – yet there is a population of twenty-thousand or so. To the east is Pevensey Bay, a splendid sweep to Hastings; immediately west is Beachy Head, a grand chalk cliff, about 600 ft. high, the sea up to the base. Behind, the magnificent stretch of the South Downs.

The calm was wonderful. On the top of the Head I could light my pipe without sheltering the match. I could sit each night on the shore till ten o’clock, feeling perfectly warm & comfortable. It is clear that Eastbourne will in future be my health-resort.

The final chapter of *Thyrza* repeats the sentiment when we are told that Egremont left Brighton and started to walk eastward along the coast:

He was no stranger to Brighton; he knew that, if one is obliged to visit the place, it is well to be there under cover of the night and to depart as speedily as possible from amid its vulgar hideousness. So, not later than eight on the following morning, he left the abomination behind him, and was approaching Rottingdean. His destination was Eastbourne.

There follows an enthusiastic description of the walk until the meeting with Annabel after climbing the ascent to the east of the Cuckmere river crossing, considered by Gissing to be “as sweet a bit of landscape as can be found in England.” The walk from this point is over downland largely undisturbed in the last hundred years although the village of West Dean, then

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being visited by Mrs. Ormonde, is now obscured from the road by a Forestry Commission plantation. Suddenly the wide sweep of Eastbourne Bay appears with the cliffs beyond Hastings in the far distance. A steep descent to the Meads and Mrs. Ormonde’s home, “The Chestnuts,” at

the foot of the downland path. An enlightened Town Council in the 1920s purchased 4,000 acres of downland here to prevent creeping urban development. Thus, the well defined border between downland turf and tree-lined Meads is very much as Gissing would have known it in 1886. Plenty of shrubberies here still for twentieth-century Thyrsas to overhear dark secrets.

Gissing's enthusiasm for Eastbourne is a tribute to the 7th Duke of Devonshire who in the previous decade had committed part of his vast fortune in an ecstasy of building of such taste and quality that the town became known in the 1880s as the "Empress of Watering Places." In little more than ten years he converted a straggling series of hamlets on his Compton Estate into a sustained piece of town planning. It is unmatched in Sussex and only the larger development at Bournemouth, which strongly influenced the civic design of Eastbourne, is at all comparable. Other resorts at this time were erecting, by public subscription, statues of Queen Victoria. Not so Eastbourne, where the citizens gave pride of place to the 7th Duke who still sits majestically overlooking the bandstand, at the head of Devonshire Place. Queen Victoria is not to be found in the town.

The population in 1886 was 25,000 and growing rapidly. Even after more than a decade of intensive development the pace of building hardly slackened. The Town Hall, in Classical Renaissance style, was completed in 1886 and opened with true Victorian pomp. The Devonshire Park Theatre, red plush and gilt, in 1884, and the Winter Garden, modelled on the Crystal Palace, three years earlier. Here residents and holidaymakers enjoyed roller skating under the newly introduced electric lights.

Thyrza arrived at the brand new Eastbourne Railway Station. London, Brighton and South Coast railway architecture at its best. In fact, with newly cleaned brickwork and a profusion of flowers it still has a fresh and elegant appearance. At the request of little Bessie Bunce, Mrs. Ormonde's carriage took the front road so that Thyrsa could obtain her first glimpse of the sea. A confusion of impressions – the illimitable sea, the imposing pier, built by the celebrated pier builder, Eugenious Birch, and the newly built grand hotels. With the carpet gardens they still dominate Eastbourne's seafront, protected against other commercial development by successive Dukes of Devonshire to the present day. She passed the impressive Grand Hotel built ten years

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earlier. It still retains its prestigious five-star status. Passed All Saints Convalescent Home with its magnificent chapel built by Henry Woodyear, a pupil of William Butterfield, in the Victorian Gothic Revival style – a temple of high church Anglicanism which must have impressed Christina Rossetti when she visited her sister, a patient here. Finally, to "The Chestnuts," Mrs. Ormonde's house in the Meads, where the town gives way to eighty miles of glorious upland – the green roof of Sussex.

Among the seafront promenaders with their sunshades, blazers and boaters in 1886 could be seen the scholarly figure of the Rev. Charles Lutwige Dodgson, who came to Eastbourne for his first holiday in 1877, when he was already a celebrity, having published *Alice in Wonderland* in 1865. He had been dissatisfied with his previous resort, Sandown in the Isle of Wight, and then spent summer holidays in Eastbourne for twenty-two consecutive years in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Dyer, 7, Lushington Road. Mr. Dyer worked in the Post Office. The house is now a dental surgery. A nice touch as Dodgson was something of a dental freak, visiting the dentist as others visit their barber. At the recent unveiling of a Blue Plaque on the house by his grandniece, Pamela Collingwood, the origin of his nom-de-plume came to light. He wrote under several names for the *Comic Times*. The editor did not like any of them. Rev. Dodgson then decided to translate his two Christian names – Charles Lutwige – into Latin and reverse the order. This convoluted process gave him – Lewis Carroll.

Another regular holidaymaker at the time was Friedrich Engels, who a few years earlier entertained his friend, Karl Marx, at his lodgings in Cavendish Place. Engels loved Eastbourne

and arranged for his ashes to be scattered off Beachy Head. A decision perhaps influenced by thoughts of his friend's gloomy sepulchre in Highgate Cemetery.

Comparisons have been made between the philanthropy of James Dalmaine, based on self-promotion, and the impractical efforts of Egremont which came to nothing. We are told that Dalmaine, who cared not one jot for the working man, meant to link his name with Factory Acts, Education Acts and Acts for better housing in order to enhance his social and political credit. "A big employer of labour'll do more good in a day, just because he sees profit'll come of it, than all the mooning philanthropists in a hundred years." Cornelius Vanderbilt is quoted as an extreme example of the breed in stark contrast to the good-intentioned Egremont. The third type of philanthropy as practised by Mrs. Ormonde is often overlooked, although it tends to produce

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practical results, albeit on a limited scale. It is also largely altruistic. This type of philanthropy has a definite Eastbourne flavour.

The Eastbourne Association of Voluntary Services today lists 400 groups all intent on helping some of the 86,000 population and others further afield. One such group provides holidays for poor children from South London – Chestnuts, Mark 2. Then there is the owner of a large mansion in the area who has given his magnificent home to become a residence for people with a learning disability. He now lives in a tiny cottage in the grounds, somewhat wryly called the "Folly."

Thyrza's second visit to Eastbourne was in far less happy circumstances. She was slowly recovering from her breakdown. Mrs. Ormonde arranged lodgings for her with a Mrs. Guest at the eastern end of Eastbourne – the opposite end to the Meads. Here Thyrza could give her landlady occasional help with the needle. She could look through a diamond-paned lattice upon the flat beach where fishermen kept their nets and boats. Eastbourne exercised its healing power. It was not long before she declared that the sea seemed to be the best friend she ever had. The district has changed little. Fishermen still sell their catch from the beach here. Geraniums still stand on the windowsills of neat terraced houses.

Overhearing private conversations behind shrubberies in this closely built part of the town would of course have been quite impossible. This vital part of the plot had to take place in the green and spacious Meads which, we are told, was not as far as Thyrza thought. A tribute this to Gissing's walking skills as the long, uphill walk along the entire seafront is a formidable task and would certainly have overtaxed her strength. Then came the shock of the conversation overheard and the long walk back to her lodgings. Sustained by the secret conviction that after two years of waiting all would be well, she was able to welcome Lydia to Eastbourne. We are told they spent long hours by the ebb and flow of the tide. "It's made me well again, Lyddy. I shall always love the sound of it, and the salt taste on my lips!"

The two years of patient waiting spent with Mrs. Emerson in London, making herself ready for the day when Egremont would make his grand entrance, came to an end at last. Agonising days of suspense when unquestioning trust gave way to bleak despair. A furious Thyrza set out once more for Eastbourne determined to accuse Mrs. Ormonde of treachery. An outburst of righteous anger followed by an aching emptiness which even therapeutic Eastbourne was unable to fill. Back to Lambeth and a rapid decline.

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Gissing did not return to Eastbourne in fiction although he personally made several subsequent visits. After the publication of *Thyrza* he faced February snow in the rather cheerless 27, Brightland Road where he paid Miss Brown ten shillings per week. Definitely down market from the lodgings of both the Rev. Dodgson and Friedrich Engels. All three houses are still

standing. During this visit he presumably made the acquaintance of the mysterious Miss Curtis who lived with her aunt, Mrs. Thornborough, in nearby Church Street. This visit was dramatically terminated by a telegram announcing Nell's death. However, by April, he appears to have recovered sufficiently to make a lightning visit to Eastbourne to see Miss Curtis and present a copy of *Thyrza* to her aunt. By May he could stand the suspense no longer and rushed off to Eastbourne in a fever pitch of anticipation. The diary records a massive anticlimax with the words – "All gone off in smoke." Miss Curtis disappears from the scene and remains elusive in spite of the present writer's efforts to track her down.

Six years later he spent a holiday with second wife, Edith, and son, Walter, at 6, Grove Road, opposite the railway station. He was finishing *In the Year of Jubilee*, the weather was perfect and the diary records splendid walks to Beachy Head, Pevensy and the downland villages. Eastbourne at its best, in contrast to the following year when he records, "A very poor week, lodgings bad, weather worse."

Eastbourne's fascination survived this setback. In 1897, Christopher Parish, the Cockney clerk in the *Town Traveller*, dreams of greatness after winning a newspaper competition: "I shall have a rise, too, Polly. I'm feeling my feet at Swettenham's. Who knows what I may get to? Polly, I might – I might some day have a big business of my own, and build a house at Eastbourne. It's all on the cards, Polly. Others have done it before me."

Gissing did not build a house at Eastbourne, but in *Thyrza* he recorded the town's charm, which, in spite of second world war bombing and changing holiday patterns and without being in a time warp, has to a remarkable extent survived our turbulent century.

"There is much of Gissing himself in *Thyrza*, his fine enthusiasm for literature, his exile in America, his return to England to his first-beloved. *Thyrza* herself is the dream-woman of Gissing's early, chivalrous nature; had he actually met her, all might have been well." May Yates (1922)

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### Book Review

*Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Volume 135: British Short-Fiction Writers, 1880-1914: The Realist Tradition, ed. William B. Thesing, Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1994.

Like all the volumes in this well-known series, this is a big book, over 450 quarto pages long, with many illustrations. Jacob Korg contributed an excellent biography of Gissing to volume 18, which appeared when the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* was still in its infancy, and an essay on Gissing as a bookman will appear in another, scheduled for publication in the next year or two. The present volume will be useful to anyone interested in the short story at the turn of the century in that it contains 37 essays on writers who made their mark, durably or ephemerally, in this medium. While we find the names represented in most anthologies of *fin-de-siècle* short stories, Bennett, Crackanthorpe, George Egerton, Hardy, Jerome, Moore and Morrison, we are also confronted with minor artists that even specialists of the period have very rarely come across, for instance Ada Nield Chew and L. P. Jacks.

Regrettably, the essay on Gissing is not one of the best. Donald E. Hall's competence to write on the subject strikes us as at best doubtful, and one marvels that the general editor of the volume, William B. Thesing, allowed such an essay to be printed without demanding extensive alterations. Both casual reader and specialist will be disturbed by Hall's contradictory attitudes. Now he approaches Gissing with a "superior" pose verging on contempt, now he praises him as



a fine artist in the field of short fiction. Although genuine empathy is nowhere perceptible, he analyses such short stories as “Lou and Liz,” “Our Mr. Jupp,” “Comrades in Arms,” “An Inspiration” and “The Tout of Yarmouth Bridge” in a perceptive manner, but he does not even mention a good many others which Gissing scholars and anthologists of the last eighty years have selected for special praise, for instance “The Day of Silence,” “A Poor Gentleman,” “The Scrupulous Father” and “A Daughter of the Lodge.” The overall impression prevails that only a handful of stories in the four major collections published from 1898 to 1938 have been read by the critic, and that the selection of texts submitted to analysis has been made by the long arm of chance. The number of statements relating to the background of the stories that invite contradiction – and in a few cases rouse indignation – is alarming. Mr. Hall’s knowledge of

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Gissing’s life might have seemed creditable before the publication of *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*, but in the 1990s its deficiencies are intolerable. What is one to think of the abyssal ignorance that led the commentator to write that “one might wonder what motivated Gissing’s sporadic attention to women’s issues (and sporadic it was, for he continued to create vapid, stereotypical female characters throughout his career)?” Who ever believed that at any time in his life “Gissing wrote as many as seven stories a month, receiving fifteen pounds or more for each one”? No one, however vaguely familiar with his work, would say that he produced “many essays” in the last few years of his life. Nor would anyone agree that, before he left for France and Italy in 1888 (surely these two countries do not make up the whole of Europe) he rediscovered his love of antiquity, or that he and Gabrielle separated in 1901, or that “The Pig and Whistle” was the last story he wrote. To this selection could be added a long list of confusions (between Gabrielle Fleury and her mother, for instance), misleading statements and worthless *rapprochements* which are offensive to Gissing’s memory. Lastly, if quoting from one’s predecessors is a perfectly legitimate procedure, the quotation had better not be one of the most imperceptive statements to be found in the book concerned. Only a critic overfond of simplification could assert that “the subjects of Gissing’s last works are the same as those of his first.” This smacks of the worst kind of late Victorian journalism.

If this book, which has plenty of positive aspects, is ever reprinted, the grossest contradictions and all the factual errors in the Gissing section should be removed.—P. Coustillas

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#### Notes and News

Besides the Edwin Mellen Press edition of Gissing’s memorandum book in the Huntington Library and the new edition of *The Whirlpool* (Everyman Paperback) that we announced recently, several volumes can be confidently expected to appear in the next few months. Simultaneously with *The Whirlpool*, in April, Dent will publish a new edition of *New Grub Street*, edited by D. J. Taylor. The two volumes will sell at £5.99 and £3.99 respectively. About the same time Shigeru Koike’s translation of a selection of Gissing short stories for the Iwanami Library should become available. Eight stories are to be included: “A Victim of Circumstances,”

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“Lou and Liz,” “The Poet’s Portmanteau,” “The Justice and the Vagabond,” “The Light on the Tower,” “The Ring Finger,” “Humblebee,” and “Christopherson.” The volume will end with a Translator’s Postscript.

The editor of the *Journal* is glad to report that the French translation of *By the Ionian Sea* that he mentioned over two years ago has at long last been handed over to the Presses Universitaires du Septentrion (formerly Presses Universitaires de Lille). Gissing's travel narrative will be preceded by an introduction and a bibliography, and followed by notes. It is hoped that Brian Ború Dunne's *Recollections of Gissing in 1897-1898*, at which time the two men saw much of each other in Siena, then in Rome, will also be published in 1997.

Wulfhard Stahl has been able to obtain a xerox copy of the Russian translation of *Thyrza* in book form (1893). Like the English original, the text of the translation is divided into 41 chapters, but as the book is only 367 pages long, it is clear that the novel has been abridged, a very common practice in Russia at the time. Gissing's other novels that were published in Russian translation – in *Vestnik Evropy* and elsewhere – were also abridged. So what he wrote of Fanny Lebreton's translation of *Demos* could apply to the Russian versions of his works. Wulfhard Stahl also reports some of his discoveries in the National Széchényi Library of Budapest, notably a copy of the Tauchnitz edition of *Demos* (Leipzig, 1886) and the very scarce Heinemann and Balestier edition of *Denzil Quarrier* (Leipzig, 1892). More mysterious are a 1931 dissertation, *George Gissing munkásregénei*, and a translation, possibly only partial, of *New Grub Street*, dated 1920. We hope to be able to clear up these mysteries in the near future.

At a meeting of the Calabrian Circle of Como and the local authorities of that city which, on 30 September 1996, celebrated at the Villa Olmo what was officially called "l'identità dei Calabresi e l'integrazione a Como," Dott. Badolato had an opportunity to deliver a short speech on "Calabria: Esponenti e Visitatori illustri." Among the visitors he mentioned were Edward Lear, Lenormant and Gissing. He reminded his audience of some anecdotes related in *By the Ionian Sea* which took place at Cosenza, Catanzaro and Reggio Calabria. Francesco Badolato has finished translating Gissing's "Italian" letters; he hopes a publisher will welcome the prospect of publishing them, duly introduced and annotated.



The Gritti Palace Hotel (formerly Palazzo Swift), Venice

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During a recent stay in Wakefield, it was discovered by two travellers who shall remain anonymous that No. 9 Wentworth Terrace, where Mrs. Gissing, her daughters Margaret and Ellen as well as Walter lived at the turn of the century, has been called "Gissing House" by its new owners. Readers are reminded that the Gissing Centre in Thompson's Yard has books for sale, a poster on Gissing in Wakefield and postcards. Inquiries and orders should be addressed to Anthony Petyt, the Honorary Secretary of the Trust.

The exhibition on Greek colonization in the Western Mediterranean held at the Palazzo Grassi, Venice, from 24 March to 8 December 1996 was a major event of undoubted significance to anyone interested in antiquity. Seeing all the exhibits and reading their descriptions in both Italian and English could hardly be done, even casually, in less than four or five hours – Gissing would have said four or five days. As we noted last year, the Catalogue of the Exhibition, a quarto volume of 800 pages, available in Italian and in English, is a remarkable work which supplies all the background that Gissing had in mind when he visited southern Italy. Its editor is Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, an authority on ancient Greek colonization. The publishers (Bompiani in Italy; Thames and Hudson in England) claim on the front flap of the dust-jacket that this "magnificent catalogue is the most detailed and wide-ranging study ever of Greek civilization in the Western World [...] *The Western Greeks* offers unparalleled visual and textual documentation [1,600 illustrations, 600 of which are in colour] of this fascinating and formative period of Greek history. [...] Following a chronological path, the book traces the diffusion of Greek influence in the West, not only in Magna Graecia itself, but in areas to the North and West, including Rome, Gaul and Spain. Every aspect of the new societies is explored, from town planning and economy to the evolution of the Greek alphabet, from the maritime

adventures of the first Achean navigators to the revolutionary thought of the first philosophers.” The catalogue of the exhibition proper is preceded by over sixty essays by experts, Italian, French and English. Among the illustrations which will spontaneously remind the reader of Gissing’s journey the best is a handsome one of the Tavole Palatine (p. 150), which he called the Table of the Paladins.

The visitor to Venice often walks in Gissing’s footsteps. His address there, Pension Gründl, Palazzo Swift, 2467 S. Maria del Giglio, can easily be found in the Campo del Traghetto, but it

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is now a five-star hotel, the Gritti Palace Hotel, of which a photograph taken in late October last year is reproduced on page 36.

To the best of our knowledge, Albert and Martha Vogeler were the first Gissing scholars to notice the new name in the summer of 1993. The building might look a little too impressive for a place in which Gissing could have afforded to stay for a month in early 1889, but then Frau Gründl only occupied one floor of the Palazzo, and since the number and other details, such as its standing just across from S. Maria della Salute, corresponded with Gissing’s account, there was no room for doubt. Was he aware that he had had no less a literary predecessor than Ruskin, who, with his wife, had stayed there some forty years earlier, when the house was called the Casa Wetzlar? If he had been, he would certainly have noted the fact in his diary and mentioned it to one or two correspondents. A volume edited by Mary Luytens, *Young Mrs. Ruskin in Venice: Her Picture of Society and Life with John Ruskin 1849-1852* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1965), carries an illustration opposite p. 211 which shows the Casa Wetzlar, looking probably more like the Palazzo Swift known to Gissing than the Gritti Palace is like Palazzo Swift. Presumably what Mary Luytens calls the main floor, almost entirely rented by the Ruskins, was the piano nobile, the one above the ground floor, the latter being almost level with the Grand Canal; it may also have been on that floor that Gissing lived. As recently as 1994, we discover thanks to Professor Martha Vogeler, the Gritti Palace was in the news when it was for sale (“ITT’s Sheraton Unit in Pact to Buy Ciga Hotels of Italy,” *New York Times*, 10 February 1994, with a photograph of the hotel taken from the Canal). An Italian brochure available a few months ago said that the hotel has 37 rooms, 11 suites, 5 large conference and reception rooms (according to Gissing the house was immense). Hemingway is known to have been one of its most famous residents.

A number of other places, statues and inscriptions referred to by Gissing await the visitor. As one would expect, the café to which he liked to go – and listen to the music –, Quadri’s, is still there, on the Piazza San Marco, and the band, although a smaller one than in his day, starts playing before noon. The proprietors proudly tell you on a pennon that the café has been extant since 1638 (“Dal 1638”), and the descendants of the pigeons whose ceaseless movements are described in the diary are not missing. The statue of Garibaldi by G. Michieli, the Venetian sculptor, which was unveiled in 1887, awaits you at the entrance to the Giardini pubblici, and Gissing’s judgment on its artistic quality strikes one as quite fair. The inscription near the Ponte

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d’Olio that he took the trouble of copying out in his diary on 12 February 1889 reads as clearly as it did over a hundred years ago. Practically wherever you go in his footsteps you find what he described. You may safely expect to see the Calle Beruch in the Ghetto; the two Moors “built into houses” on the Campo dei Mori (although admittedly to-day most of their colour and shape has gone), the Liceo Benedetto Marcello (now turned into a conservatoire), the Ateneo on the Campo S. Fantin where he went to read the papers, and a good many other buildings. The floor

inside San Marco is as “hilly,” if not more, than in his time. But restaurants have gone the way of nearly all such establishments; the Caffé Orientale is no longer to be seen, nor is the Città di Firenze. And if you ask where happens to be nowadays the Bellini painting that Gissing admired in a chapel by the door of the Madonna dell’Orto, you are told that it was *rubato* (stolen) a few years ago. Well, after all, even in Venice, time passes...

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#### Recent Publications

##### Volume

Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas (eds.), *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, Volume Nine, 1902-1903*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1997. Off-white paper-covered boards with a grey tape binding and, on the spine, gilt titling on dark green panel. Dark green dust-jacket with pattern in light green. xxxv + 451 pages. \$70.00. ISBN 0-8214-1166-7.

##### Articles, reviews, etc.

H. C. G. Matthew (ed.), *The Gladstone Diaries, with Cabinet Minutes and Prime Ministerial Correspondence*, Vol. XII, 1887-1891, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. New evidence will be found on pp. 61 and 71 that Gladstone read *The Unclassed* and *Thyrza* in 1887.

J. H. Stape and Owen Knowles (eds.), “A Portrait in Letters: Correspondence to and about Conrad,” *The Conradian*, Vol. XIX (1995), nos. 1-2, Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1996, pp. xxxiii + 287. Three letters of Gissing interest are reprinted on pp. 39-42: those

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from Conrad to Clodd of 30 November 1902 and from Gissing to Conrad of Christmas Day 1902 and 9 May 1903.

Pierre Coustillas, “The Romantic Impulse in Gissing’s Pacifist Novel *The Crown of Life*,” *Rivista di studi vittoriani*, Vol. I, no. 2, July 1996, pp. 5-22.

Francesco Badolato, “Rossano in Lenormant e Douglas,” *Calabria Sconosciuta*, no. 71, July-September 1996, pp. 49-52. Short passage on Gissing and the *sindaco* of Cotrone on p. 51.

Martha S. Vogeler, “Book Reviews: Gissing Letters, 7,” *English Literature in Transition*, Vol. XXXIX (1996), no. 3, pp. 348-51.

Arthur Morrison, *A Child of the Jago*, ed. Peter Miles, London: J. M. Dent and Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, 1996. This Everyman edition of Morrison’s best known novel is the most satisfactory that has so far been published. Gissing frequently appears in the critical apparatus. Still the notion that he “missed the fun” of Morrison’s novel makes one wonder what definition of “fun” the editor would be prepared to give. The extracts from the reviews of *A Child of the Jago* transcribed from Methuen’s advertisements are left undated, and the Acknowledgments could have been made a little longer.

Sandra Kemp and Lisa Lewis (eds.), *Writings on Writing by Rudyard Kipling*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Gissing is mentioned on several occasions.

Masahiko Yahata, *Mu*, no. 10, 1996, pp. 3-34. New translations of "Their Pretty Ways" and "Christopherson." Mr. Yahata will soon have retranslated enough Gissing short stories to fill a volume.

Pierre Coustillas, "Gissing's Two Introductions to *David Copperfield*: Veracity in the *Bildungsroman*," in *David Copperfield*: Charles Dickens, ouvrage collectif sous la direction de Jean-Pierre Naugrette, Paris: Ellipses, 1996, pp. 12-20.

Pierre Coustillas, "Aspects of the Late Victorian Publishing Scene: George Gissing and His Publishers," *Journal of the Eighteen-Nineties Society*, no. 23, 1996, pp. 3-14. This is the text of the lecture delivered in London on 29 May 1996.

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### Information for Contributors

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

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