

THE GISSING JOURNAL

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

Volume XXXIII, Number 4

October, 1997

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First Announcement
Gissing Conference
9-11 September 1999

English Department, University of Amsterdam
Spuistraat 210, 1012 VT Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Preparations are under way for an international Gissing Conference to be held at Amsterdam in the late summer of 1999. The organizers have gratefully accepted the offer made by the English Department in the University of Amsterdam to host this first major conference to focus on the works of the novelist, whose reappraisal has been intensified by and has greatly benefited from the recently completed publication of his collected correspondence.

The conference will be held at the newly restored Doelenzaal, a splendid example of seventeenth-century Dutch architecture, in the heart of the old city. Within walking distance are some of the world’s greatest art collections, housed in the Rijksmuseum, the Municipal museum and the Van Gogh museum.

The members of the organizing Committee are:
Prof. Martha S. Vogeler (USA), Prof. Jacob Korg (USA), Prof. Pierre Coustillas (France),
Dr. David Grylls (England) and Drs. Bouwe Postmus (Amsterdam).

The aim of the conference is to further the international exchange of the results of recent research on Gissing, ranging from the theoretical to the empirical, and from the biographical to the bibliographical.

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George Gissing, Henry James, and the Concept of Realism

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It will be noticed that in this (inevitably incomplete) essay I have quoted mostly critical articles by Gissing's and James's contemporaries, which can be found in the Critical Heritage Series. This is not by reason of the accessibility of these texts, although this may be a convenience for both writer and readers, but because I wished to examine the problem in a purely historical perspective.

This is a difficult, if not impossible task, since the conception of what constitutes a novel has undergone a radical transformation, as predicted by James himself, and the concept of realism, when it has not been totally abandoned, has taken on new shades of meaning. But the fact remains that in Gissing's and James's time this concept was a recognisable reality, however unsatisfactorily defined, and also that the novel itself did respect certain norms. Both Gissing and James transgressed, to some extent, these norms. It is not my intention to discuss this transgression of norms in the sense in which the expression is used in modern critical theory.

Obviously, as René Wellek has remarked, one cannot look at the past with the eyes of the past. Our mode of approaching, reading and interpreting texts has become profoundly modified in recent years. However it seems to me that one has to respect and to take into account, as far as is possible, the reactions and opinions of those critics and writers who had not been exposed to our current literary and textual theories; to do otherwise, when discussing the conception of the novel and the ideas underlying it at a given period of the past would be, for my present purpose, a complete anachronism.

Although many circumstances separated George Gissing from Henry James, they also had a great number of points in common: they were almost exact contemporaries for the period of their productive lives (James published his first novel in 1875, Gissing in 1880); they were both passionately interested in "the art of fiction," and expressed themselves abundantly on the subject; both, although pressed financially, refused to write "pot-boilers,"¹ producing instead an experimental type of novel, often unpopular with their contemporaries, but later to be appreciated by restricted groups of *literati*; both confined themselves mainly to the novel or short story; both, as has been pointed out, were interested in "the dynamic relationships between

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[the characters] within the frame of a social pattern of behaviour”²; they had common friends, not the least among them Meredith and H. G. Wells; both were cultured men and admired Dickens and George Eliot as well as the classics; both detested “advertising” and “gentlemen sitting down to dispose in half an hour of what a few have spent months and years in producing.”³ Finally, although both claimed to be, and have been termed “realists,” they shared a common horror of the general “vulgarity” of contemporary life.

Furthermore, as has been demonstrated at some length by Adeline Tintner and others there are elements of plot and character in some of James’s works which might lead one to think that James had been influenced by Gissing,⁴ and it has also been suggested that Gissing underwent some influence from James, notably in *Isabel Clarendon*.⁵

However, it is not my intention to discuss here the question of “influence.” Two novelists writing in the same period about contemporary men and women, witnessing the same social and intellectual scene, are likely to produce texts which present some resemblances; the number of possible situations is, after all, limited, and in the matter of characters stereotypes abound: P. Coustillas has noted the prevalence of legacy-hunters and globe-trotters,⁶ and much has been said about the “typical English spinster,” and there are many others, whose existence in fiction is explained by the socio-economic conditions of the time. The notion of “influence” could perhaps more usefully be replaced by that of “intertextuality,” if the term did not have other associations. Obviously, if a novelist asserts that he has been influenced by the reading of a particular book, we incline to believe him, although this is not necessarily true, but if he acknowledges nothing at all, then any “influence” would be difficult, if not impossible, to prove. Similarities in literary texts may be, as in non-literary ones (if it can be said that such exist), no more than the reflection of a common source, a shared experience. Furthermore, although James himself admitted to a tendency to “rewrite” an idea or an incident from a text which had interested him, it must be pointed out that with his horror of “facts” which he exposes at some length in the preface to *The Aspern Papers* and *The Turn of the Screw*,⁷ the merest detail sufficed to set him off along his own course, the final result usually being totally different from the point which had been at the origin of his creative impulse.⁸ To quote only one example, the life of the impecunious journalists depicted in James’s tale “The Papers” (which has been called “James’s *New Grub Street*”⁹) is not, for us, the fundamental subject, which would seem to be rather the problem of “truth” versus “fiction,” and which is also the subject of others of James’s

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tales written about the same time, such as “The Real Thing,” “The Private Life” and even of *The Turn of the Screw*, in which the “truth” is unknowable. In “The Papers,” the fabrication of entirely imaginary “news,” believed by, and popular with, the public, reveals rather James’s preoccupation with “appearance” and “reality.”

This, however, is the situation as far as Gissing and James are concerned: in spite of the great number of points in common, mentioned above, in spite also of the fact that each read some of the other’s work, the effect of these readings is hardly mentioned apart from James’s famous article occasioned by the publication of *The Whirlpool*.

On Gissing’s side, mentions of James number only seven in his *Diary*¹⁰, namely:

- “1887, June 20: Sat down with Henry James’s *Partial Portraits*, foreseeing that it would take up my evening” (p. 33)
- “1891, Oct. 3: Got from libs [Henry] James’s *The American* [...]” (p. 257)
- “1892, Ap. 16: Got from lib. Henry James’s ‘The Tragic Muse’” (p. 276)
- “1892, July 29: Got from liby H[enry] James’s ‘Princess Casamassima’” (p. 282)
- “1892, Oct. 1: Reading some short stories of Henry James” (p. 285)

- "1893, July 24: Read Henry James's 'The Real Thing'" (p. 310)
- 1896, June 20: surprised allusion to Harold Frederic whom "I had classed with Henry James; I found a burly man with hands like a blacksmith's, talking roughly, and with American accent" (p. 413)

One can only be astonished at the absence of critical comment in these entries, especially with regard to *The Princess Casamassima* (published six years previously) and which was supposed to have a "working-class" subject. Admittedly, critical remarks are scarce in the *Diary*, but on the other hand, one notices that when Gissing has decided opinions, favourable or unfavourable, about an author and his work, he states them with some force. Thus this absence of comment may be attributed to the undecided nature of Gissing's thoughts about James and his work.

More definite comments, as reported by Gabrielle Fleury, expressed the opinion that "Henry James was an example of the misfortune of a *déraciné* novelist. He had lost his Americanism, without ever acquiring as a novelist the Eng. nationality, so that his novels have something *factice*, untrue, uncharacterized – Very subtle psychology – even too subtle sometimes – his personages not living. – He thought H. James was not to be compared with

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Meredith."¹¹ In another reported remark, Gissing notes that in the presence of James, Wells "had a constrained manner, looked rather like a little boy," and that "James, for his part, treated Wells rather condescendingly, with a shade of distinct superiority."¹² Gissing appeared surprised at this, but the accuracy of his observation is amply borne out by the reading of James's letters to Wells in which the Master talks down to the Pupil, and which came to an abrupt end in 1915, not because of James's death, but because the Pupil had dared to make a little fun of the Master and challenge his conception of the writer's art.¹³

The few letters exchanged between the two, three from James and one from Gissing,¹⁴ which followed Gissing's visit to Rye and his gift to James of *By the Ionian Sea*, do not shed much light on their relations. James is as effusive and vague as he is in most of his letters and to most correspondents: the book is "beautiful," "charming," "eloquent," "vivid," "easy" and so on; "in short, what a distinguished production!"¹⁵ Gissing's letter is amiable and factual; he talks mainly about his health and the weather, invites James to Arcachon. Perhaps the only point of note in this letter is the remark he makes about Wells: "The odd thing is that he ought to regard me with great contempt, & yet I don't think he does. The amiable virtues are well mixed with the virile, in his case."¹⁶ Is this a slightly ironical reference to James's attitude to Wells?

James's reply exhorts Gissing to take care of himself and to work if possible, however little, alludes to his own work and also contains a significant judgment upon Wells, referring to Gissing's letter: "Wells – gallant & generous youth, yes – has produced a very brilliant & suggestive volume, certainly a very amusing & beguiling one; which, though too crude & too simplifying as assertion & prophecy, shows him as having much more than one knew, an interesting little *mind* ... of life there is more to be said than he has yet learnt."¹⁷ The deadliness of this shaft cannot have escaped Gissing and more than justifies his reported comment on James's assumption of intellectual and artistic superiority, also manifest in a later fragment¹⁸ again expressing James's opinion of Wells and also of Conrad, in which bouquets and brickbats are in the familiar Jamesian technique, alternated. In fact, not much is suggested by the reading of these letters except, negatively, that Gissing and James were not really interested in each other: "work" is alluded to but not discussed, and there is a notable absence of exchange of ideas.

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Further than this there would seem to be no other direct evidence of the relationship in which James stood with regard to Gissing than James's review, published in *Harper's Weekly* in 1897, ostensibly of *The Whirlpool*.¹⁹ I say "ostensibly," because in fact James says very little about the book supposedly under review. It would obviously be preferable to summarise this article, but this one finds oneself unable to do. James's remarks, strategically placed as they are, and with clearly negative intent, cannot be quoted out of context, without losing much of their import. I am here not alone: F. R. Leavis, in dealing with James's criticism in general, says "There would be no point in summarising the criticism or (it is hardly, the student will find, a separable thing) the way in which he makes it."²⁰

James begins by apologising for the lateness of his reactions: he is dragging the book from "an antiquity of several weeks" – as well as others which have been submitted to him, he hastens to add. This is not a good sign in Jamesian criticism: it will be noticed, as in letters to H. G. Wells and others, that an apology for lateness is usually a prelude to unfavourable appreciations. James, by nature a kind man, was reluctant to hurt authors' feelings, at least at the outset (for he usually gets carried away by his deep-seated conviction of the inadequacy of other people's conceptions of fiction²¹), and his unwillingness to commit himself cannot be attributed merely to his personal occupations, considerable as they were at the time.

Then, having occupied some six lines with this apology, or excuse, he proceeds to express the regret that Gissing should not have kept *In the Year of Jubilee* (1894) for the present time (James had been commenting on the public Jubilee celebrations in his previous article), because the latter book has "some points of superiority to *The Whirlpool*," in which case he would presumably have had some kind remarks to make about it; but unfortunately he does not explain what these points of superiority are.²²

Then follows a remark of a general order about the author of *New Grub Street*, which novel has given him his "persistent" taste for Gissing, a remark somewhat qualified by the following one, namely that he "almost as persistently" finds Gissing disappointing. We do not know how many of Gissing's works James had actually read (*The Whirlpool* was Gissing's seventeenth work of fiction), but the word "persistently" would seem to imply much reading (of which there is absolutely no evidence in the enormous bulk of James's writings). It would seem that James had been impressed mainly by *New Grub Street*,²³ and to judge from his later

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remarks, Gissing's earliest novels; however it must here be kept in mind that *New Grub Street* is somewhat of an exception in Gissing's novels and in fiction in general, dealing as it does with all the aspects of the "business" of writing, on which James took the same position; it was rather rare for James to find anything in common with other authors, and if he imagined that the other novels would resemble *New Grub Street*, he was bound, in most cases, to be "disappointed."

Why is James disappointed? The answer is vague: Gissing has gone far (in which direction?), but "refuses to go further." The analysis of the text does not make it possible for the reader to infer the purport of this remark. Is it because he neglects certain aspects of novel-writing, "distribution" and "composition," which James finds indispensable? Logically, the two sentences do not appear to be linked; moreover James does not define these two terms, but comes back to his question: how is it that one can enjoy such a novelist?

The fact that there is a novelist about whom one can ask such a question is in itself, for James, a matter for wonderment: "To go far enough to do anything is, in the conditions we live in, a lively achievement," he answers.

After this preamble of generalities from which, perhaps, the only points to be gleaned are James's own dissatisfaction with his lot as a writer, his disapproval of most other novelists, and a grudging admission that Gissing is, after all, not the worst of a bad bunch, James at length

attacks the subject, confessing that although the book has “substance” and “emotion,” *The Whirlpool* has been “a manner of grief” to him. It is the “emotion” which sustains both the book and James’s interest in Gissing’s work (although James does not explain how this “emotion” is conveyed, the remark, banal in appearance, is significant, as I shall show with reference to James’s conception of “realism”).

Gissing is an interesting case of “saturation” (another of James’s obsessions), he goes on. He admits that to call an author “an interesting case” is hardly flattering, but “we must take what we can get,” and what we get in Gissing is a saturation with the “lowest middle-class” which makes him an “oddy” and an expert on a vast and unexplored region.

Returning to generalities (which he has never really abandoned) James remarks that the English novel has not much treated this sphere of life: low life, with its crimes and vices, on one hand, and on the other, the higher classes have been plentifully portrayed, but with the exception of Dickens, no author has recognised the vulgar, and Dickens has made the “vulgar” acceptable

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by showing it as funny or ridiculous.

The originality of Gissing then lies in the fact that, according to James, he has dared to treat seriously the subject of these vulgar lowest-middle-class people. As he also refers to Brondesbury and Pinner, we understand that he is referring to *The Whirlpool*. However it would not appear that these “lowest-middle-class people” can be the characters of this novel. The social sphere portrayed here is referred to by G. Tindall as “urban middle-class,”²⁴ Alma has “habits of good breeding,” and refers to herself as “upper-middle-class,”²⁵ echoed by the reviewer of the *Manchester Guardian*,²⁶ while that of the *Pall Mall Gazette* deems her “middle-class,”²⁷ and the *Academy* refers to “society, the middle classes, the rank and file of the professions and arts, the people of comparative leisure, the men of business.”²⁸ *The Critic* speaks of these people as “intelligent, cultivated, well-to-do,”²⁹ the *New York Tribune*³⁰ and the *Nineteenth Century* as “fashionable society”³¹ (H. G. Wells as only semi-fashionable³²). It is difficult, in view of the situations depicted in the text, and the opinions of these other commentators, to justify James’s epithet “lowest-middle-class.” Is the epithet “vulgar” applicable? Not perhaps to the characters’ exterior behaviour, but to their minds. Alma’s passion for music proves to be no more than the manifestation of her desire to shine in society; and the making, spending and losing of money is one of the main themes of the book and the obsession of most of its characters. Most critics agree on this use of the word “vulgar.” But of this James says nothing; instead he refers to the “dreariness” of Brondesbury and Pinner. It would seem that the “suburbs” (including Wimbledon) represent for him a kind of outer darkness, a no man’s land inhabited only by savages. The “vulgar” means for him just “the visible and audible common,” the ordinary, the undistinguished; and apparently, in his mind, the sometimes very different social spheres depicted in *The Whirlpool* and in Gissing’s earlier works can all be lumped together under the same heading, as not Chelsea or W., thus normally beneath James’s notice, or deserving at the very utmost some kind of ethnological survey (cf. *The Princess Casamassima* and James’s “research” in darkest London), in fact, and to sum up, the possibility of another “subject.”

This is hardly surprising. James, after many visits to England and some years of residence there, had absolutely no notion of the subtleties of the English class-system, nor of the “class-mobility” which characterises it.³³ He assimilates for instance the “common” and the

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“vulgar,” whereas in English there is a distinction between the two terms: people may be “common” without being “vulgar”; they may be “vulgar” without necessarily being “common.”

In Gissing's novels these distinctions are well brought out: minds of refinement are found, through force of circumstance, in environments which James would inevitably have classified as "common" or "vulgar"; the obverse is also the case, and it is one of Gissing's great merits that he should have observed the distinction between mind and *milieu*.

In the Preface to *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, the authors, referring to the reception of *The Emancipated* (1890), point out that "all in all [the book] failed to receive its due" because "the public had come to regard Gissing as the portrayer, with Walter Besant, of the lower orders of society and could not readjust its sights after a single book on an altogether different subject."³⁴ It is my suggestion therefore, that James is here, seven years later, committing the same confusion, in assimilating Gissing's earlier novels and also *In the Year of Jubilee*, which we know he had read, and in which the ordinary, the common and the vulgar may be found in abundance, with *The Whirlpool*, in which quite different classes of society are depicted, vulgar-minded though they may be, and that consequently, he had not read the book very attentively.

Indeed, the criticisms which follow are of a general nature, and do not appear to apply particularly to the book under review. With what does James reproach Gissing? He has already congratulated him on his "saturation" ("with the visible and audible common"), but he immediately accuses him of not staying outside it "as much as he might." It is difficult to grasp the notion of staying outside one's saturation; one wonders if James is not really saying that in order to be saturated to such an extent the author must participate in some degree in the vulgarity of the characters he represents. He cannot conceive that, as the reviewer of the *Times Literary Supplement* was to point out, Gissing is something of a rarity, "a gentleman and a scholar, with the gift for expression in fiction" who knows "the nether world."³⁵

However, this point is not elucidated, but in typically Jamesian fashion the expression "stay outside" is used as a superficial transition to another idea: Gissing stays "far too little" on the question of "form." James's paragraph is thus not interrupted here, despite his change of subject, and it is no longer the social sphere depicted which concerns him, but the "form." These remarks about form are no more flattering than the preceding ones: James gives a definition of talent: "It is form above all that is talent," then complains that Gissing's form is deficient, from

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which we may infer that Gissing's talent is equally deficient; he also lacks "intensity of imagination." James feels himself obliged to explain what he means by "these matters" (apparently form, as he no longer mentions imagination), insinuating that the author of *The Whirlpool* may not be in a position to understand: he means "the whole question of composition, of foreshortening, of the proportion and relation of parts." James does not say in what ways this relates to the book under review nor to any other of Gissing's works, which leaves the relevance of these strictures somewhat vague.

Last but not least, he reproaches Gissing with committing a sin quite general among novelists of his time: the abusively long reports of spoken words (the irony of this is that James himself is often guilty of the same crime, notably in *The Awkward Age* written only two years after *The Whirlpool* and almost exclusively in dialogue) and on this point at least the critic expresses himself clearly: "everything dealt with in fiction appears at present to occur simply on the occasion of a few conversations about it." It thus, firstly, takes up undue space (which was exactly the aim of some novelists, given the three-decker system), interferes with the art of presentation, and excludes the sense of time, of duration, of the conditions in which events take place. Modern authors should go and learn from Balzac, concludes James. Even works as "interesting" as Gissing's are marred by this defect. It is strange to hear that James recommends a judicious use of the omniscient author as a remedy for this proliferation of "useless" dialogue. But James does not hesitate to contradict himself in order to make a point against another author,

and there is another example of this in the same paragraph: one of his arguments against the use of dialogue is that “it crowds out ... the golden blocks of the structure,” whereas in “The Art of Fiction,” in order to criticize Walter Besant, he has already declared that he “cannot imagine composition existing in a series of blocks.”³⁶

The conclusion of James’s article is apologetic: is the best thing he finds in Gissing “only an opportunity to denounce”? (he must have had an uneasy feeling that this would be exactly the reader’s impression). But no, there are two other things: one is “the pretext of speaking by absolute rebound, as it were, and in the interest of vivid contrast, of Pierre Loti” (is this a compliment?), the other his wish to express his “liveliest sympathy” with Gissing. This remark is followed by a series of compliments which do not appear always to tally with the criticisms voiced above nor to appear so important to James as the negative points, but which are usually

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quoted by admirers of Gissing because they are the most favourable remarks in the article. However if James was a master of the brickbat and bouquet technique, he was also past master of the Parthian shot: “If he only had distinction he would make the suburbs ‘hum’” is his final judgment on Gissing (the last sentence again concerning only the general theme).³⁷

This is not only an unsatisfactory piece of criticism because James does not relate it to the book supposedly under review, it is also an unfair one, because these generalities cannot be countered or disproved. The remarks concerning Gissing’s lack of talent and distinction, for instance, are damning, and not to be redeemed by any faint praise.³⁸ Admittedly, James had not yet met Gissing, but it is the lot of most critics not to know personally the authors whose books they review. It is not known if Gissing read the article; at all events it must be considered as a most inauspicious prelude to any possible future personal relationship.

This being so, what precisely does James find fault with in Gissing? The point which occupies the largest portion of the article concerns the use of dialogue. He appears to be accusing Gissing of the same sin with which Reardon accuses himself in *New Grub Street*: “He kept as much as possible to dialogue; the space is filled so much more quickly, and at a pinch one can make people talk about the paltriest incidents of life.”³⁹ There are three answers to James’s objection: first, that Gissing was so aware of this failing in many novels of the time that he is deliberately drawing attention to it, and that it would appear strange not only that he should just as deliberately be guilty of it, but that James, having read *New Grub Street*, should not have noticed this. And although in his Introduction B. Bergonzi notes that the book “is undoubtedly marred by an excess of thinly spun conversation, as Gissing himself realized, for when the book was translated into French in 1898 he made radical cuts in the conversation material,”⁴⁰ this is only a surmise: the author may have made them for other reasons, for instance that a somewhat shorter text might be more readily accepted by a foreign public, or again that the “paltriest incidents of [English] life” may have had less significance for French readers.

The second answer follows on logically: dialogue may be used for three purposes: it reveals the character and the social and intellectual status of the speakers; it may allow the plot to move forward economically, without undue indulgence in lengthy narrative; and it may convey and dramatize ideas (as in *Born in Exile* and *Our Friend the Charlatan*). Thus apparently unimportant incident may indeed be significant and the mere fact of its being

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reported in dialogue does not automatically disqualify a text. In *The Whirlpool* itself there seems to be little superfluous dialogue. Strangely enough, the impression of the present writer is that much of the speech reported is of an elliptic, suggestive, “sibylline” nature, queerly reminiscent

of a certain Henry James.

There is also a third answer in "The Art of Fiction." Henry James himself expressly rejects the idea that a novel may be divided into "dialogue," "incident," "character," "description," and so on. "I cannot ... conceive ... in any novel worth discussing at all, of a passage of description that is not in its intention narrative, a passage of dialogue that is not in its intention descriptive."⁴¹

James's comments on Gissing's lack of talent and distinction we can disregard as mere value judgments, and those on the question of composition, foreshortening and so on are too vaguely formulated to bear examination.

In fact what James is inflicting on Gissing in this article is much akin to his treatment of Trollope's *The Belton Estate* thirty-one years previously. In this extremely aggressive article of 1866, James complains of a Biffen-like type of realism: the characters' "sayings and doings, their comings and goings, are registered to the letter and timed to the minute. They write a number of letters which are duly transcribed; they make frequent journeys by the down train from London; they have cups of tea in their bedrooms, and they do, in short, in the novel, very much as the reader is doing out of it." James concludes that "*The Belton Estate* is a *stupid* book ... it indicates the manner in which a novel should *not*, on any account be written ... Mr. Trollope is a good observer; but he is literally nothing else... All his incidents are, if we may so express it, *empirical*. He has seen and heard every act and every speech that appears in his pages."⁴²

Admittedly James finds more to praise in Gissing than in Trollope, but at the heart of the matter there is already the problem of the differing interpretations of the concept of "realism," and this gives us the key to the absence of contact between James and Gissing referred to above: the two authors have radically opposed conceptions, not so much, perhaps, of what a novel should be, but of its subject matter.

As René Wellek has remarked, "realism" has meant widely differing ways of writing at different periods and in different countries. Confining himself to the use of the term in the nineteenth century, he traces its history from France where as early as 1826 a journalist had written that "this literary doctrine which gains ground every day and leads to faithful imitation

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not of the masterworks of art but of the originals offered by nature could very well be called realism. According to some indications, it will be the literature of the nineteenth century, the literature of the true."⁴³ The concept was formulated more clearly by Champfleury and Duranty in 1856-1857, and became "a definite literary creed.... Art should give a truthful representation of the real world; it should therefore study contemporary life and manners by observing meticulously and analyzing carefully. It should do so dispassionately, impersonally, objectively."⁴⁴

Unfortunately (or fortunately), as soon as a concept is defined in so many words, difficulties arise. If realism can be defined thus, or more simply, as it has been, as "fidelity to life," one finds oneself not only in need of a definition of "truth," "reality" or "fidelity,"⁴⁵ but also of a discussion about whether "life" (and it may also be asked, what "life," the author's, the characters', or "life in general"?) can actually be observed "dispassionately," "impersonally" and "objectively." The impossibility of arriving at a consensus on the answer to all these questions, which would ideally require a philosophical debate, a kind of activity to which novelists in general, and most critics, with a few exceptions, are not usually given, has dominated the whole question of the concept of realism from the beginning to the present day. And it is inevitable, in view of this imprecision, that novelists writing quite different types of novels should have been dubbed "realists," or called themselves so. George Gissing and Henry

James constitute an ideal case in point.

In his essay "The Place of Realism in Fiction,"⁴⁶ Gissing states the issue most clearly, wishing, first "that the words *realism* and *realist* might never again be used, save in their proper sense by writers on scholastic philosophy." "In relation to the work of novelists," he goes on, "they never had a satisfactory meaning, and are now become mere slang." The word should be discarded in view of the "imbroglio" created by its use, and the question examined anew.

This Gissing proceeds to do. He first explains logically the origin of realism and naturalism, which were the expression of a revolt against conventionality and insincerity in fiction. Without dissociating himself from this fundamental attitude, he points out that the first writers of this tendency were inevitably attracted by subjects usually deemed "vulgar, base, or disgusting" or alternatively dull and "depressing" and therefore unfit for fiction; this gave the movement its reputation for "pessimism."

Gissing is here reporting faithfully the tenor of the discussions of his time. The quarrel between Walter Besant and Andrew Lang on the "realism" of *New Grub Street*⁴⁷ summarises the

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two dominant tendencies: Besant declares, in substance, that the book is depressing and pessimistic and thus true to life, while Lang protests that it is not, or rather only to the "seamy side," calling it "perverted idealism."⁴⁸ More fundamental aspects of this literary concept are not discussed, nor is it anywhere hinted that the problem could be stated otherwise than in terms of "pessimism," "optimism," and so on. This oversimplified but typical contemporary view of the question was repugnant to Gissing, who rejected both critics' judgments in a letter to E. Bertz.⁴⁹

One could hardly deny that Gissing was, in general, a pessimist, and he had some reason to be. But it must be admitted that the criteria of "pessimism," "idealism," etc. are an unsatisfactory basis for a critical attitude. It was understandable that Gissing (usually counted among the realists *because* pessimists) should not have subscribed to this definition of realism. He had ideas about his art at once more subtle and more precise.

Thus he proposes that the problem should be stated in quite other terms: the questions to be asked about any work of fiction are, first "whether it is sincere," and second "whether it is craftsmanlike." The latter point he deals with immediately: "constructive ability and the craft of words [the novelist] cannot dispense with," but they will avail him nothing if he lack "the spirit of truthfulness." This expression may appear unnecessarily unwieldy at a first reading, but Gissing immediately goes on to justify its use: it is "quite a different thing from saying that no novel can be of worth if it contain errors of observation, or fall short of the entire presentment of facts." Thus, factual errors and omissions are of minor importance provided the author's attitude be "truthful": in other words Gissing is not concerned with "truth" as such. The fact that he points this out reveals his tendency to philosophical reflection on literary matters, which is confirmed in the following important passage, in which he poses a fundamental question: what do we mean by "reality"? It is his definition of reality which puts him, intellectually, on a higher plane than most critics of his time, and which brings him, as we shall show, much nearer to Henry James than the reading of their respective novels might suggest.

He first makes an important distinction between the world of science, of "facts demonstrable to every formal understanding" which we have to call "real," having no choice but to accept it as such, and the world of art in which "reality has another signification." This signification is made clear by another philosophical remark: "What the artist sees is to him only *a part of the actual*; its complement is *an emotional effect*," followed by its logical

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consequence: "Thus it comes about that every novelist beholds a world of his own, and the

supreme endeavour of his art must be to body forth that world *as it exists for him*.⁵⁰

In consequence, there can be no “science of fiction,” and to talk of “objectivity” is “worse than meaningless”; the writer’s only criteria can be his sincerity, i.e. his *personal* “truthfulness,” not any abstract “truth about life,” and the artistic capacity which he brings to the representation of reality *as it appears to him*. As for the critic, his only task is to examine and assess these two points.

The problem has never been more logically, clearly and concisely stated than in this short passage written by Gissing in 1895, and which, as far as content is concerned, might have been written by Henry James himself if the latter had not been so vague and long-winded. Indeed, as has been pointed out, James had said something to the same effect, although with characteristic imprecision, and without addressing the fundamental question of definitions, eleven years before, when he wrote of “the very obvious truth that the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer,” concluding that “the only condition I can think of attaching to the composition of the novel is ... that it be sincere.”⁵¹

What then can be said about Gissing’s “world”? The main point which concerns us here is that it was, perhaps in spite of appearances, a very much broader one than that of James. His novels give us convincing pictures of widely varying social and intellectual spheres, obviously acutely observed, and in which he moved alternately with the greatest ease: *Isabel Clarendon* and *Demos* were published in the same year, 1886. His attentiveness to the psychological coherence of his characters and to their idiosyncrasies produces portraits of individual personalities; it would be hard to find a stereotype in his work. His situations (in spite of a tendency on the part of critics to focus their remarks on the eternal “wife-problem” in view of his personal experience) are extremely varied, and worked out logically according to the psychology of the characters concerned: the absence of closure in *Isabel Clarendon* does not have to be an imitation of Henry James; Isabel is an indecisive kind of person who has already been badly treated in life and is not quite sure of what she wants. There was no reason to make her marry Kingcote in order to please some readers, and the fact of the threads “hanging loose” at the end of the story is in fact the “foreordained and inevitable close”⁵² called for by everything which precedes it. There is an interesting letter written by James to W. D. Howells

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on the ending of *The American*, which Howells had criticised. James replies by imagining all the other hypothetical endings, concluding that they were “impossible” and that “the interest of the subject was, for me, (without my being at all a pessimist) its exemplification of one of those insuperable difficulties which present themselves in people’s lives and from which the only issue is by forfeiture – by losing something.”⁵³ There appears to be no question of influence here, but only a growing realisation on the part of fiction-writers that there were situations in “real life” which had not yet been tackled in fiction.

Gissing, it is hardly necessary to point out, was much preoccupied with the moral, social, and intellectual problems of his day: the theme of moral responsibility underlies most of his work, as it had George Eliot’s; he examines in detail the questions of education, the situation of women and children, and of the underprivileged in general; all of which problems were vital to his contemporaries and for which he does not indeed “preach” solutions, but which he dramatizes successfully by the working out of concrete or moral situations and the evolution of the characters involved under the force of circumstances; and lastly he acts as a kind of filter for most of the ideas current in his time, notably in books like *Our Friend the Charlatan*, or again *Born in Exile*, where the characters are not mere mouthpieces for the conveying of ideas, but individuals representing all the possible attitudes to the question of evolution, and who live and act coherently, in conformity both with their personal psychology and their opinions.

However, in spite of this preoccupation with current issues Gissing's work is not merely a series of documentaries. Critics have compared him from this point of view with his contemporaries: "Mr. George Gissing is a realist, although he does not belong to that popular school of realists in fiction of whom it may be said that their books would be merely dull but for their truth – and it is their truth which makes them dreadful ... he writes of the most painful facts and he is never brutal ... we are not shown these men and women of the East-end silhouetted against a red background of savagery and horror, as in some of Mr. Morrison's books"⁵⁴; another points out that he "rarely if ever described the actual life of the slum. He left to others the natural history of the denizens of 'John Street' and 'The Jago.'"⁵⁵ In effect, *pace* Henry James, Gissing's novels are carefully composed and written; it is in great part his "craftsmanship," his art of reorganising mere facts, of representing and not just presenting, that has saved his books from the fate of those mentioned above and of many others. But, in spite of

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this art of representation, no critic, to my knowledge, has ever accused Gissing of artificiality or of the "insincerity" which he abhorred.

He expressed himself lucidly on the subject of realism as he conceived it and defined it, and was faithful to the concept in that he described the world as he saw it. There is thus a great coherence and logic in the whole of Gissing's artistic career. Furthermore his world was a very comprehensive one, and if it was real to him, it is also real to us today because we can recognise it.

James's world is, in some sense, far narrower, in spite of his claim that "the novel is of all pictures the most comprehensive and the most elastic," that "it will stretch anywhere" and "take in absolutely anything," and that for subject "it has the whole human consciousness."⁵⁶ However this may be true, the fact remains that James moved in a more restricted social sphere than Gissing. Unlike Gissing, if he had many friends, he had no experience of the deeper relationships of marriage and fatherhood. Both in the physical sense and the artistic sense he rarely moved outside his own little circle, and was not concerned with the social problems of his time. His one rash excursion into the lower classes was hardly crowned with success.

Nonetheless, James claimed to be a realist, has been called so by critics, and was supposed with W. D. Howells (wickedly described by Gertrude Atherton as rather a "littleist" than a realist, and the founder of the "school of the commonplace"⁵⁷) to belong to the American realist school. But there have been as many differences of opinion about his realism or lack of it as in the case of Gissing. Admittedly, James's manner evolved; his first novels such as *Roderick Hudson* (1876), *The American* (1877), etc, are more "realistic" in that they recount events and circumstances more explicitly than in his later works, which were to be the subject of so much criticism, and which are mainly concerned not so much with events themselves as with people's reactions to them, their impressions, the evolution of their motivations, and in general with the undercurrents of human relationships not explicit but only suggested or hinted at. The overall impression is one of what is usually called "ambiguity," and this has been so amply commented upon by critics that a few examples will suffice for illustration. I shall continue to use the term because it is convenient, although I do not consider that it really fits the case, for reasons which will appear later.

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This ambiguity even extends to "things" in the later novels: in *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897), the precious objects alluded to as part of an important heritage are not explicitly named; and finally they disappear in flames when Poynton is burnt down, just as the Aspern papers, the

object of so much intriguing on the part of the “publishing scoundrel,” are destroyed by Miss Tina, their contents for ever unrevealed (“The Aspern Papers” [1888]); the “small, trivial, rather ridiculous object” of which the fabrication has made the Newsome family’s fortune is discussed for some two pages by Strether and Miss Gostrey: the latter desires to know the nature of the object; Strether refuses to enlighten her, and finally “her desire for the information dropped and her attitude to the question converted itself into a positive cultivation of ignorance. In ignorance she could humour her fancy, and that proved a useful freedom” (*The Ambassadors*, 1903).⁵⁸ This little incident epitomizes James’s attitude to the writing of fiction in general, and we shall return to the subject later, but it must be admitted that the foregoing examples might not have inclined his contemporaries to regard him as a realist.

The dialogue of his novels also becomes steadily more and more ambiguous: sentences broken off, questions left unanswered, exclamations of which the sense is not clear. Julian Hawthorne proclaimed James’s realism for this very reason: “Each utterance is so exactly like what it ought to be, that the reader feels the same sort of pleased surprise as is afforded by a phonograph which repeats, with all the accidental pauses and inflections, the speech spoken into it.” Perhaps so, but Hawthorne is here alluding to the speech of “real life,”⁵⁹ and it must be recognised that in real life the speakers are in a context which allows them to interpret unfinished sentences, or exclamations which may convey, linguistically, little meaning, just as they may interpret gestures and facial expressions unaccompanied by words. That James himself had not really solved this problem of context is clear from a remark he makes in *The Art of Fiction*: “It is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on a table and look out at you in a certain way; or if it be not an incident I think it will be hard to say what it is.”⁶⁰ Now here by “incident” James means of course a “significant incident,” and this gesture as such cannot be interpreted as a sign if one is ignorant of the context. This is the case, then, of much of James’s dialogue: the omniscient author (supposedly banished by James himself) knows the “story” and the reader is kept in the dark. Some passages of dialogue are incomprehensible until one has practically finished the book, and far from leaving the reader with a “pleased”

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impression, he feels excluded and somewhat exasperated. This feeling of exclusion was well expressed by one critic who compared James’s technique to a well-known “party game,” in which one member of the party is sent out of the room while the remaining members devise ways and means of “mystifying” him on his return, when he must guess the subject of their conversation.⁶¹

This cannot be said of Gissing, whose characters, even when their speech is vulgar or ungrammatical, articulate and pursue conversations as though they were on the stage, leaving the reader in little doubt about the subject under discussion. From a Jamesian point of view this might perhaps in some measure mitigate Gissing’s claim to realism, but to this it may be objected, as previously noted, that we are dealing with the writing of realist *fiction*, and not with the reporting of the raw materials of “real life”; for the present writer, the inarticulateness of much of James’s dialogue is *not* evidence of realism by reason of the absence of a context which *does* exist in real life, and this was no doubt partly responsible for his total failure as a dramatist.

Other remarks could be made on the “irrealism” of James’s dialogue: aristocratic English ladies did not use American slang, and small children did not call their parents and governesses “my dear,” and so on. More important perhaps is the fact that the characters are not differentiated by their speech: all speak a kind of mid-Atlantic Jamesese, so that it is sometimes difficult to know who is talking; the only exception is to be found in *The Princess Casamassima*, where a sprinkling of dropped aitches and a few minor grammatical errors are a sign that the lower classes are speaking; James said that he walked the streets of London to do research for

this novel, but he obviously did not listen to them. In this respect Gissing cannot be faulted: his characters' speech is always appropriate to their social and intellectual situation, as well as to their individual personalities.

The absence of context also explains the reader's bafflement when confronted, for instance, at the beginning of *The Awkward Age* or *The Tragic Muse*, by a situation for which he is not prepared. Here again the reader has the impression of entering a large room full of people whom he does not know, and to whom he is introduced only by name, and here again it might be said that this happens in real life, but as the ambiguity of speech reinforces the ambiguity of situation the reader often remains unenlightened for a longer period than is usual, which entails a good deal of re-reading. The ambiguity reaches its crowning point in *The Turn of the Screw*, where it

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extends to the entire story, of which there have been, and no doubt will be, countless interpretations, and which we have called an example of "Pragmatism at work."⁶²

This brings us to the heart of the problem. Henry James was by way of being a pragmatist, a word which has been, and is, constantly misused in the sense of one for whom "the end justifies the means." It is surprising to see the word used in this sense in an otherwise excellent recent book by an American critic, Millicent Bell, who systematically describes one of James's more sordid characters, Kate Croy, in *The Wings of the Dove*, as a "pragmatist" because she persuades her lover into a marriage with a dying heiress, so that they shall, on her death, be able to live happily ever after.⁶³ It will also be noted that here "pragmatism" is wrongly equated with "materialism" and "practicality."⁶⁴ By this definition, Madame Merle might then also be called a "pragmatist" because, as the abandoned mistress of an impoverished American, she arranges the latter's marriage with Isabel Archer so that Isabel's considerable fortune may enable the illegitimate couple and their equally illegitimate daughter to end their days in comfort (*The Portrait of a Lady*); in fact a great many of James's characters might be similarly designated, preoccupied as they are with trying to obtain something to their advantage which does not rightly belong to them. In the interest both of definition and morality it might also be pointed out here that "pragmatism" thus popularly conceived is likewise the doctrine of "success." James's characters all fail lamentably in their enterprises: Isabel leaves her husband; Kate Croy and Merton Densher decide not to accept the money, and are disappointed in each other; the Aspern papers are destroyed: and, if pragmatists fail, then by this definition they are not good pragmatists.

Fortunately, this kind of sordid manoeuvring has nothing to do with the philosophical sense of the word "pragmatism," with which Henry James was familiar, and of which his novels are in many ways, illustrative.

Briefly, Pragmatism, founded by C. S. Peirce and William James, was a philosophical movement of which the basic notion is that ideas are not Platonic and stratospheric; they produce "effects" (in the scientific sense) and conduce to action: "In methodology it is certain that to trace and compare their consequences is an admirable way of establishing the differing meanings of different conceptions," says William James, while Peirce proposes his famous "maxim" for attaining "clearness of apprehension": "Consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then,

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our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object."⁶⁵ Although these remarks obviously concern only concepts and processes of reasoning, it was perhaps inevitable that they should be misapprehended by a certain audience. Peirce reacted strongly against this

misapprehension, and distanced himself somewhat from William James, baptising his form of Pragmatism “Pragmaticism,” in order to underline the difference. However, there are two notions shared by all pragmatists. First, that Truth is not absolute, but a continuous process of creation. As William James said: “The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is *made* true by events. Its verity *is* in fact an event, a process.”⁶⁶ Second, that all phenomena present to the mind are *real* whether they be *existential* or not, e.g., a dream or a hallucination are “real” to the dreamer and the hallucinator.⁶⁷

Henry James was very close to his brother William, with whom he entertained a constant correspondence all his life. He also frequented Peirce continuously in Paris in 1875-1876, and, by his own account, profited greatly by their numerous discussions. Later, on reading William’s *Pragmatism*, he exclaimed: “I was lost in wonder of the extent to which all my life I have ... unconsciously pragmatized.”⁶⁸ It will by this time be obvious in what sense pragmatism may *properly* be said to be relevant to the realism of Henry James, but in order to establish a clear distinction between James’s type of realism and that of Gissing, we shall be obliged to have recourse to the Categories of Peirce.

Peirce, in elaborating his philosophy, established “A New List of Categories”⁶⁹ destined to replace those of Aristotle and Kant, for the classification of phenomena. These categories number only three: Firstness, the category of *possibility*: thus of impressions, feelings, sentiments, which have not yet been concretised; Secondness, the category of *existence*: thus of facts, events, happenings; Thirdness, the category of *law*: of abstraction, systems, theories. These categories cannot be dissociated, and stand in a hierarchical relationship to one another: Thirdness implies Secondness and Firstness, Secondness implies only Firstness, and Firstness implies nothing, being the category of mere possibility; the inverse order is impossible: Secondness cannot imply Thirdness, for instance.

All discourse about something pertains to Thirdness because it is based on a linguistic system, and expresses articulate ideas. However, the object of the discourse may pertain more particularly to one of the three categories, i.e. in a discourse about “events” the object will

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pertain to Secondness; if about ideas, to Thirdness; but, as noted above, this distinction between the categories is only theoretical, as they cannot be separated in fact: the dualistic distinction between mind and body, for example, is unthinkable in Peirce’s triadic system.

The fundamental concepts of pragmatism, the definition of truth, the distinction between the existential and the real, and Peirce’s hierarchical categories are invaluable for clarifying confused issues like the question of deciding whether Gissing and James can both be called “realists,” being so different from each other, and if so of what kind.

Peirce’s distinctions enable us to state the question of realism more clearly: “realism” is an abstraction and as such pertains to Thirdness, i.e. it cannot *exist quâ* abstraction. Admittedly one can talk about abstractions, but no amount of abstract definition can ever give one the experience and “meaning” of realism; if one wants to know what realism means, one has to examine an occurrence of it, a concrete text pertaining to the category of existence. And so-called novels of realism are so varied in type that an accumulation of reading may confuse the issue more than it clarifies it; the impossibility of making valid generalisations from a number of particular cases is at the origin of critical disagreement.

It would appear that both Gissing and James *are* realists, if one accepts their essential definition, which, in both cases says that the realist must sincerely describe life as *he* sees it: “his own world.” As writers and observers they both speak from the point of view of Thirdness, but their worlds are different. Gissing is more concerned with Secondness; with actions, events, happenings and circumstances: in letters of advice to his brother Algernon he insists on the

importance of “fact” and “incident,” and counsels him to avoid “analysis.”⁷⁰ This of course does not mean that he neglects Firstness, which by virtue of the hierarchy of categories is implied by the two other categories; indeed, one of James’s grudging admissions is that he has found “feeling” and “emotion” in Gissing’s writing. But action plays a more dominant part in his work than in that of James.

James, on the other hand, has a horror of “facts,” of the “particular,” the “contingent,” as he explains in detail in the Preface to *The Aspern Papers* and *The Turn of the Screw*.⁷¹ It has usually been recognised by critics, favourable and unfavourable, that he portrayed an “inner life” and that he is more preoccupied by motive and situation than with plot: “it is the character, not the fate, of his people which occupies him; when he has fully developed their character he

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leaves them to what destiny the reader pleases,” as W. D. Howells said.⁷² “In front of the reader nothing happens,” complains George Moore.⁷³ And in general the criticisms levelled at him concern the endless scrutinising of feelings, impressions, shades of meaning which he himself is sometimes unable to make clear to the reader. W. C. Brownell compared him to Cuvier “lecturing on a single bone and reconstructing the entire skeleton from it,” the only difference being that James was absorbed only in “the positive fascinations of the single bone itself.”⁷⁴ A parody by Owen Seaman of *The Sacred Fount* is typical James in that nothing happens except in the narrator’s head, which narrator is left standing, inconclusively, on the edge of a pavement.⁷⁵ All of which James himself admitted: “my work definitely insists ... on unfolding itself from its own ‘innards,’” he wrote in a letter to W. D. Howells.⁷⁶ Indeed, the reader feels that James, in *The Tragic Muse*, is speaking for himself when he makes Gabriel Nash say: “People’s actions, I know, are for the most part, the things they do, but mine are all the things I don’t do ... My only behaviour is my feelings.”⁷⁷

In fine, James has made the pragmatic distinction between the real and the existential; for him what is “real” is what is felt, and this he will continue all his life to try to make the reader feel: “Life consists of the personal experiments of each of us, and the point of an experiment is that it shall succeed. What we contribute is our own treatment of the material, our rendering of the text, our style ... People may not read you at sight, may not like you, but there’s a chance they’ll come round; and the only way to court the chance is to keep it up – always to keep it up,” says Gabriel Nash.⁷⁸ This is a metaphor in the text, but it is also literally true of James’s career. The conveying of feelings and impressions demands a different technique from the conveying of facts and events, and from the reader’s point of view renders the text more difficult; people had indeed a tendency to abandon him before having extracted a sense from the text. For a reader must play a more active part in the reading of James than was usual in his time; James very pragmatically involves the reader in the creation of a text, in other words makes him do “half the author’s work,” as Edna Kenton remarked,⁷⁹ gives him “a blank cheque” to be filled in, as Leon Edel has it,⁸⁰ or, in terms of Peirce’s semiosis, leaves the reader to exercise his own interpretants on a very vague representamen in order to produce his own Object, to produce his own “truth.”⁸¹ The critic who said that “Mr. James is an author one reads once, but not twice”⁸² was wide of the mark: James demands continuous re-reading, and the process of the creation of signification is shown to be endless.

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It is for this reason that although I have continued to use the word “ambiguity,” for convenience’ sake, and because it has been used, I object to it on the ground that it implies that one of several readings is “true.” Todorov evokes the existence of a “secret,” “a hidden truth”⁸³ which will never be revealed. But this also implies that there is “something.” I rather think that

James's aim was to create simply a climate of vagueness and imprecision, enabling, or rather obliging, the reader to cooperate. It must not be forgotten that William James stated the inevitability of pluralistic readings as early as 1885, when he wrote; "Everyone knows *Ivanhoe* ... but ... few would hesitate to admit that there are as many different *Ivanhoes* as there are different minds cognizant of the story," adding, in a note, "that is, there is no 'real' *Ivanhoe*, not even the one in Sir Walter Scott's mind as he was writing the story. That one is only the *first* of the *Ivanhoe* solipsisms."⁸⁴ If we can agree for the most part with this there would however appear to be a little slip on William's part in the use of the term "real": I incline to think he meant "true"; Peirce and Henry James could have corrected him: all *Ivanhoes* are *real* to the minds that are cognizant of them.

In fact Henry James was often attempting an impossibility: that of rendering in linguistic terms feelings and impressions which like those of pain or grief, for instance, cannot be conveyed adequately in language. What is *felt* is real, but often inexpressible. In recent times Nathalie Sarraute has attempted a similar enterprise, with similar reactions on the part of her readers; if the reader recognises himself in the text, or makes an *intuitive* effort to comprehend, then he will admit that this is indeed realism, but obviously on a different level from that of Trollope, or even of Gissing.

The only conclusion, therefore, is that both Gissing and Henry James were realists according to their lights. The initial definition, common to both, that a writer must sincerely portray the world as he sees it, is seen to be respected by both, but, by reason of the different objects of their thought and discourse, their case is an illustration of the fact that a fundamental idea may produce very different texts, according to the minds which put this idea into action. This conclusion can be arrived at, however, only with due regard for definitions, and in the context of the history of ideas.

[I am indebted to Pierre Coustillas for the information contained in notes 22 and 23, as well as for other valuable information which was practically inaccessible to me when I started work on this article.]

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¹When James himself, in a letter to H. G. Wells, says that *The Turn of the Screw* was essentially a "pot-boiler and a jeu d'esprit" (Percy Lubbock, ed., *The Letters of Henry James*, 2 vols., New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920, vol. I, p. 299) we cannot credit the former term, given the long and minute description he gives in the Preface, of the reflection necessary to make the tale an artistic creation (R. D. Blackmur, ed., *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces by Henry James*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons (1934), reprinted 1953, pp. 169-77).

²André Guillaume, "The Jamesian Pattern in George Gissing's *New Grub Street*," *Gissing Newsletter*, January 1984, pp. 28-33.

³James in a letter to C. E. Norton, March 1873, *Henry James: The Critical Heritage*, Roger Gard, ed., London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968 (hereafter referred to as *HJCH*), p.30.

⁴Cf. Adeline Tintner, "Some Notes for a Study of the Gissing Phase in Henry James's Fiction," *Gissing Newsletter*, January 1980, pp. 1-5.

⁵First by contemporary critics astonished at the absence of closure, but recently by P. Coustillas who hints at a more subtle resemblance: "Gissing had come to appreciate the virtues of suggestion after succumbing to the charms of explanation and long-winded comment" (introduction to *Isabel Clarendon* (1886), Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1969, pp. xv-lx).

⁶*Ibid.*, p. lvi.

⁷Blackmur, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*; *passim*.

⁸A. Tintner underlines this aspect of James's creative process "which he himself stated as early as 1868" (*op. cit.*, p. 2). He was still stating it in 1913, in a letter to Wells, with however a little more elaboration and some restriction: "To read a novel at all I perform afresh, to my sense, the act of writing it, that is of re-handling the subject according to my own lights and overscoring the author's form and pressure with my own vision and understanding of *the way* – this, of course I mean, when I *see* a subject in what he has done and feel its appeal to me as one; which I fear I very often don't" (Lubbock, *op. cit.*, II, p. 334).

⁹A. Tintner, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁰The following quotations are all taken from *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, P. Coustillas, ed., Hassocks, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1978 (hereafter referred to as *Diary*).

¹¹Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas, eds., *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, vol. 9, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1997, Appendix III, p. 276.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 313.

¹³See Lubbock, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 485-90 and *HJCH*, pp. 517-30. A complete account of the situation may be found in L. Edel and G. N. Ray, eds., *Henry James and H. G. Wells. A Record of their Friendship, their Debate on the Art of Fiction, and their Quarrel*. London: R. Hart-Davis, 1958. The "attack" would have been less deadly were it not that Wells's parody of

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James's writing (both style and subject matter) is so extraordinarily accurate and convincing. However, it must be admitted that the unambiguously hostile critical remarks which precede the parody must greatly have shocked what Edith Wharton calls James's "morbidly delicate sensibility." Cf. *HJCH*, pp. 342-45.

¹⁴There is also a brief reference to Gissing in a letter from James to Wells of 20 January 1902: "I had a saddish letter from Gissing – but rumours of better things for him (I mean reviving powers) have come to me, I don't know quite how, since" (Lubbock, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 390). The letter referred to must be the one written by Gissing from Arcachon, 12 December 1901.

¹⁵*Collected Letters*, vol. 8, 1996, p. 193.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 288.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 289-90.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 42.

¹⁹*Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, P. Coustillas and C. Partridge, eds., London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972 (hereafter referred to as *GCH*), pp. 290-94.

²⁰Morris Shapira, ed., *Henry James: Selected Literary Criticism*. Prefaced with a note on "James as Critic" by F. R. Leavis, London: Heinemann, 1963, p. xxii.

²¹Leavis notes "the limiting or reluctantly qualifying judgment that is the upshot of his critique." *Ibid.*, p. xv.

²²James had read *In the Year of Jubilee*. His copy is to be found at Senate House, London University.

²³James's copy of the book is at Lamb House, Rye.

²⁴*The Whirlpool*, introduced by G. Tindall, London: The Hogarth Press, 1984, p. 5.

²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 61, 86.

²⁶*GCH*, p. 276.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 278.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 283.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 287.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 285.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 289.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 297.

³³In *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), James has Mr. Touchett allude to the “lower” class, and to the “upper” and “middle” classes: “‘Gracious,’ Isabel exclaimed; how many classes have they? About fifty, I suppose.’

‘Well, I don’t know that I ever counted them. I never took much notice of the classes. That’s the advantage of being an American here; you don’t belong to any class.’

‘I hope so,’ said Isabel. ‘Imagine one’s belonging to an English class!’” (New York: Random House, 1951, pp. 77-78).

³⁴*GCH*, p. 22.

³⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 506-07.

³⁶In Shapira, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

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³⁷It is curious to see A. Tintner quoting this last remark as apparently favourable. She somewhat alters the context by concluding with one of James’s “compliments” which constitute the “bouquet” and which is actually uttered several lines above. *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

³⁸Leon Edel remarks on this technique of James, which he briefly analyses in James’s letters, notably to Hugh Walpole, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Mrs. Humphry Ward: “Sometimes the cushion-words neutralized the criticism to such an extent that the correspondent tended to overlook the real significance of what was being said. An outstanding example is to be found in certain of the letters to Mrs. Humphry Ward which, despite their sharp and direct critical content, she judged to be so flattering that she reproduced them in later prefaces – much to James’s embarrassment. For the cushioning process James had his special phrase. It was the ‘mere twaddle of graciousness.’” Leon Edel, *The Selected Letters of Henry James*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1955, pp. xxv-xxvii.

³⁹*New Grub Street* (1891), Bernard Bergonzi, ed., Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968, p. 154.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴¹Henry James, “The Art of Fiction” (1884), in Shapira, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

⁴²Henry James, “The Belton Estate” (1866), in Shapira, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-14 (p. 14).

⁴³René Wellek, *Concepts of Criticism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963, p. 227.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 228.

⁴⁵An analogous problem arises in translation: Francis Newman, translator of Homer, says that the translator’s duty is to be “faithful.” Probably everyone would agree with this, retorts Matthew Arnold, “but the question at issue between them is, in what faithfulness consists.” M. Arnold, *Essays Literary and Critical*, “On Translating Homer” (1865), London: J. M. Dent, Everyman edition, 1906, p. 211.

⁴⁶*The Humanitarian*, July 1895, pp. 14-16. Reprinted in Jacob and Cynthia Korg, eds., *George Gissing on Fiction*, London: Enitharmon Press, 1978, pp. 84-86.

⁴⁷*GCH*, pp. 181-82.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 183-85.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁵⁰Jacob and Cynthia Korg, *op. cit.*, p. 85 (my italics).

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 83. The reference is to Henry James, “The Art of Fiction,” in Shapira, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

⁵²J. A. Noble, *Academy*, 10 July 1886, *GCH*, pp. 96-97.

⁵³*HJCH*, pp. 43-44.

⁵⁴*Times Literary Supplement*, 6 February 1903, *GCH*, pp. 412-14.

⁵⁵C. F. G. Masterman, *In Peril of Change* (1905), *GCH*, p. 489.

⁵⁶Henry James, “The Future of the Novel” (1899), in Shapira, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-89, p. 182.

⁵⁷Gertrude Atherton, *Adventures of a Novelist* (1932), *HJCH*, p. 155. It should be pointed out here, in all fairness to Howells, that it was he himself who used the term “commonplace,” but in a quite particular sense, when he objected, through the mouth-piece of Charles Bellingham, to the dramatic and heroic manner of many novelists: “The commonplace is just that light, impalpable, aerial essence which they’ve never got into their confounded books yet. The novelist who could interpret the common feelings of commonplace people would have the answer to ‘the riddle of the painful earth’ on his tongue” (*The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), New York: Random House, 1951, p. 179). Defining thus the commonplace, Howells would appear to constitute a kind of link between James and Gissing: feelings are to be a subject as in James, but the novelist who could deal with the ordinary *feelings* of ordinary people (which Gissing, to a great extent, did), would be an innovator.

⁵⁸Harmondsworth: Penguin, Harry Levin, ed., 1986, pp. 96-98.

⁵⁹*Princeton Review*, January 1884, *HJCH*, pp. 140-41.

⁶⁰*Op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.

⁶¹Unsigned review, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, March 1882, *HJCH*, pp. 103-04.

⁶²J. Deledalle-Rhodes, “‘An Excursion into Chaos’: the Pragmatism of Henry James, Jr. in *The Turn of the Screw*: a Peircean Approach.” Paper read at the Third Latin-American Congress of Semiotics, Sao Paulo, 31 August-3 September 1996.

⁶³Millicent Bell, *Meaning in Henry James*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991, pp. 291, 303, 305-06, 315.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 305.

⁶⁵Charles Sanders Peirce and William James, “Pragmatic and Pragmatism,” in J. M. Baldwin, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, 3 vols., New York: Macmillan, 1901-1902, vol. II, pp. 321-22.

⁶⁶*Pragmatism* (1907), New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928, p. 201.

⁶⁷C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss, eds., Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931, vol. I, pp. 145, 284, etc.

⁶⁸Letter to William James in R. W. B. Lewis, *The Jameses: A Family Narrative*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991, p. 491.

⁶⁹*Op. cit.*, “On a New List of Categories” (1867), vol. I, pp. 545-67.

⁷⁰Jacob and Cynthia Korg, *op. cit.*, p. 63, etc.

⁷¹Blackmur, *op. cit.*, *loc. cit.*

⁷²*Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, November 1882, *HJCH*, p. 129.

⁷³*Confessions of a Young Man* (1886), *HJCH*, p. 171.

⁷⁴*Atlantic*, April 1905, *HJCH*, p. 397.

⁷⁵Owen Seaman, *Borrowed Plumes* (1902), *HJCH*, pp. 309-16.

⁷⁶Lubbock, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 415-17.

⁷⁷*The Tragic Muse* (1890), New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1961, p. 37.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 136-37; Gissing said much the same thing: “Let novelists be true to their artistic conscience, and the public taste will come round” (J. and C. Korg, *op. cit.*, p. 36).

⁷⁹“Henry James to the Ruminant Reader: *The Turn of the Screw*” (1924), in G. Willen, ed., *A Casebook on Henry James’s “The Turn of the Screw,”* p. 108.

⁸⁰*The Ghostly Tales of Henry James*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, p. xxix.

⁸¹For a full account of Peirce’s semiotic theory the reader is referred to Gérard Deledalle, *Théorie et pratique du signe*, Paris: Payot, 1979.

⁸²For an illuminating and minute study of the indispensable process of “re-reading” James,

see Millicent Bell, *Meaning in Henry James*, *op. cit.*

⁸³Tzvetan Todorov, *Poétique de la prose. Suivi de Nouvelles recherches sur le récit*, Paris: Seuil, 1971, pp. 80-115.

⁸⁴“On the Function of Cognition,” in *The Meaning of Truth*, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909, pp. 26-27. I have developed the question of the plural readings of Henry James in “Ambiguity, Interpretation and Meaning in the Work of Henry James: A Peircean Approach,” *Semiotica*, February 1997, pp. 207-21.

* * *

Gissing and the Paparazzi

Francesco Badolato and Pierre Coustillas

Like human beings, words come into existence, enjoy lives of their own, long or short, and die, though never as abruptly as their users. Etymologists and lexicographers are eloquent on the subject, and those modern linguists to whom the prospect of publishing thought-provoking volumes on the history of language strongly appeals have more material at hand than they will ever be able to recycle. But as some journalists promptly noted apropos of the word *paparazzi*, which was so extensively used after the tragic death of the Princess of Wales in Paris during the night of 30-31 August, some words have a most uncommon destiny. Was there ever a case of a surname, an admittedly curious, suggestive one, becoming a common noun with a meaning superimposed as well as unrelated to its etymology or the occupation of its bearer?

All readers and students of Gissing, but especially those familiar with his only travel narrative, *By the Ionian Sea*, are aware that the owner of the hotel where he put up at Catanzaro in early December 1897 was a man named Coriolano Paparazzo.

My hotel [Gissing wrote, following his diary jottings closely] afforded me little amusement after the Concordia at Cotrone, yet it did not lack its

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characteristic features. I found, for instance, in my bedroom a printed notice, making appeal in remarkable terms to all who occupied the chamber. The proprietor – thus it ran – had learnt with extreme regret that certain travellers who slept under his roof were in the habit of taking their meals at other places of entertainment. This practice, he desired it to be known, not only hurt his personal feelings – *tocca il suo morale* – but did harm to the reputation of the establishment. Assuring all and sundry that he would do his utmost to maintain a high standard of culinary excellence, the proprietor ended by begging his honourable clients that they would bestow their kind favours on the restaurant of the house – *si onora pregare i suoi rispettabili clienti perchè vogliano benignarsi il ristorante*, and therewith signed himself – Coriolano Paparazzo.

The worthy *padrone* probably never realized, however long he may have lived, that his name would be remembered as long as Gissing's book found readers and that it would be looked upon with curiosity at least by non-Italian readers. Norman Douglas, who travelled in Gissing's footsteps early in this century might have told Paparazzo of his unsuspected celebrity had he called upon him as he called on Dr. Sculco at Cotrone. Unfortunately, he tells us in *Old Calabria*, he forswore “the manifold seductions of Catanzaro” for the sake of the woman who

kept the provincial museum at Tiriolo. So that when the proprietor of the Albergo Centrale bade adieu to his customers and to mankind at large for ever, he could not hope for any form of immortality like that which awaited him posthumously in June 1958 when Federico Fellini and his scriptwriter Ennio Flaiano resurrected him under peculiar circumstances which show how little one can control one's own fate after death. Then it was indeed that the two men, desperately looking for a suitable name to give to the insistent press photographer in "La dolce vita", somehow granted the owner of the Albergo Centrale a new lease of life in a new garb. In his book *La solitudine del satiro* (1973), currently available from Adelphi Edizioni in its Piccola Biblioteca (No. 373, May 1996), of whose existence French journalists seem to have been unaware (although a translation by Brigitte Pérol was published by the Paris publisher Le Promeneur last year), Flaiano recorded the facts which, if well-known some twenty years ago, had practically fallen into oblivion until recently:

We had to give that photographer an exemplary name, considering that a well-chosen name helps much and means that the character will live. These semantic affinities between characters and their names were the despair of Flaubert, whom it took two years to find Madame Bovary's first name, Emma. For this photographer we did not know what to invent until, opening

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at random George Gissing's wonderful little book entitled *By the Ionian Sea*, we found a glamorous name – "Paparazzo." The photographer shall be called Paparazzo. He will never know he was given the respectable name of a Calabrian hotel proprietor, of whom Gissing speaks with gratitude and admiration. But names have their own destiny.

Thanks to the film the surname Paparazzo was quickly in current use, not only in Italy but in the Western world, as a synonym for celebrity-hunting press photographer. *Le Petit Robert*, for instance, has the word under its plural form, making the linguistically inept suggestion that in French it would be preferable not to follow Italian use, but to say *paparazzi* in the singular and *paparazzis* in the plural! The *Dizionario inglese-italiano italiano-inglese* published by the Istituto geografico De Agostini in 1974 already gave the word as a neologism, and a contributor to this journal, the late Ernesta Spencer Mills, drew the notice of readers of the *Sunday Telegraph* for 29 March 1981 to the origin of the word, by then already common enough in English journalism. In her letter to the editor, "Giving them a name," she clearly established the connection between Fellini's "indiscreet and persistent photographer" and the hotel keeper whose printed notice in bedrooms had roused Gissing's humour, and she concluded with a remark the source of which remains untraced: "Italian scholars of etymology in 1968 pointed out this strange destiny of a surname which came to be used as a noun." To Southern Italians, Paparazzo is strongly reminiscent of the verb *papariare*, a word used in the Calabrian dialect, province of Cosenza, which can be found in Gerhard Rohlfs's *Nuovo Dizionario dialettale della Calabria* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1977), Rohlfs having borrowed his information from an older dictionary, *Vocabolario dialetto calabrese*, by L. Accatatis (Castrovillari, 1897). *Papariare* is defined as *temporeggiare* (to temporize or procrastinate), *aggirarsi perdendo tempo* (to wander about, wasting one's time). Other dialectal forms are given, some of them supplied by printed sources, and all of them more or less derogatory, with such meanings as to rummage or ransack, or to waddle like a duck.

We have in our files another piece from the British press – an article by Campbell Page reporting from the Via Veneto, "Rome relives La Dolce Vita" (*Guardian*, 26 July 1983), which besides attesting the currency of the word *paparazzo*, shows that Ivan Kroschenko and Page, his

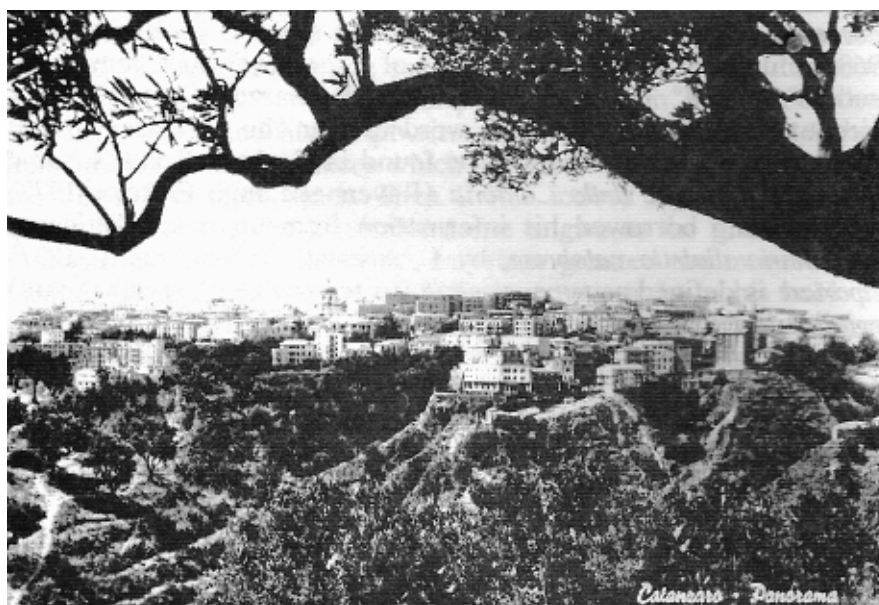
interviewer, knew about the origin of the word:

“I have never minded being called a ‘paparazzo’ because I don’t regard it as insulting,” Ivan Kroschenko says, and adds a scholarly footnote. Paparazzo is

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a Calabrian surname which appears 14 times in the Rome telephone directory now. The writer Ennio Flaiano suggested it as the name for a character in the film after coming across it in George Gissing’s book of travel “By The Ionian Sea.” That Mr Paparazzo was a friendly hotel-keeper.

No doubt mass media in various countries, France being apparently an exception, occasionally repeated the basic information when press photographers happened to make themselves particularly objectionable in this or that part of the world. We heard in the spring that a Swedish newspaper correctly traced the origin of the word to *By the Ionian Sea*. Perhaps the journalist concerned was influenced by what Peter Morton found on the Internet (see *Gissing Journal*, April 1997, pp. 28-29). Shortly before Diana Spencer’s death a German newspaper which was probably repeating mistaken information from another paper boldly asserted that Paparazzo was the name given by Gissing to one of his characters, failing to say in which of the twenty-two novels Fellini had found it (Gerd Kröncke, “Der Mann [Mark Saunders], den Diana aushält,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 23/24 August, p. 3).



Catanzaro, a general view

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It was on Monday, 1 September, that, owing to the circumstances under which the Princess died, the word *paparazzi* practically ousted all the native words for it from Western European languages. On the French radio one scarcely heard such equivalents as *photographes de presse* or *photographes-reporters* and, when one did, they were offered as rather superfluous synonyms half-apologetically. On German TV, we are told by an admirer of Gissing currently residing in Berlin, the names of the deceased Princess and of Gissing were pronounced almost in one

breath. In the evening of 1 September the Paris daily *Le Monde* felt it necessary to explain the origin of the name which all journalists were using so glibly. In a fifteen-line paragraph, mendaciously entitled “Un mot inventé par Fellini,” it was explained that the word *paparazzo* was invented in 1959 by the Italian film director at the time he was shooting “*La dolce vita*” with Marcello Mastroianni and Anita Ekberg as leading actors and that the word was an attempt at defining what the Germans in the article quoted above called a *Sensationsphotograph*. According to some people, *Le Monde* reported, the name referred to a former schoolfellow of Fellini, while according to others *paparazzi* was a running together of *papatacci* (mosquitoes), actually gnats or midges, and *razzi* (flashes of lightning), actually rockets. The paragraph concluded with an acknowledgment that the word was now found in Italian dictionaries with the meaning of *photographe d’actualité mondaine*. An elderly lexicographer-cum-journalist who can be heard every morning on France Inter between 8.45 and 9, Alain Rey, noted for his short programme “Le mot du jour,” repeated the same story on 2 September. He thought it *infra dig* to reply to fax or letter, and so did *Le Monde*, which however, after lengthy pondering, published a letter on the true origin of the word from one Françoise Reumaux, of Poitiers, who quoted from *La solitude du satyre*, thus giving Gissing his (modest) due (9 September). Faxes on the subject to the editors of *Libération*, the left-wing Paris daily, and to *La Voix du Nord*, the Lille daily which had devoted pages to the Princess’s death and copiously used the word like other papers, were simply ignored.

Meanwhile, as early as 1 September, Jasper Rothfels in the *Berner Zeitung* (“Mit Schappschüssen eine Menge Geld verdienen”) repeated the mistaken story from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, which he confessed to Wulfhard Stahl was his source. In Italy, the Milan daily *Il Corriere della Sera* (2 September) did its best to inform its readers in a paragraph appropriately entitled “Così l’albergatore Paparazzo diventò fotoreporter,” quoting from the

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latest edition of Flaiano’s book, and unfortunately reproducing the misprint in Gissing’s name (Gessing), which Brigitte Pérol duly corrected in her French translation. On 4 September the Swiss weekly *Weltwoche* published a long article by Peter Hartmann, “Der Mann, den Paparazzo war,” offering a translation of the crucial passage from Flaiano, with the by now statutory misprint, but apropos of the Italian photographer Tazio Secchiaroli coining the nice word *Ur-Paparazzo*, which, we feel, deserves to find its way into some good German dictionary.

But what of the fortune of the word and the comments on its origin in the English press? Little information has reached us and, when some did, it was through Germany. The *Economist* for 6 September, in a footnote to a good article entitled “Fame: The Faustian bargain,” combined unexpected knowledge and ignorance with a poor grasp of the measurement of time. “Fellini’s scriptwriter, Ennio Flaiano, took the name from *By the Ionian Sea*, a book by George Gissing. Coriolano Paparazzo was the proprietor of the hotel in Catanzaro where the British poet had stayed 100 years earlier on his travels around Calabria. Gissing’s book is still on sale in Calabria in an excellent Italian translation.” An attempt at having the two errors therein corrected was successful (P. Coustillas, “Letters: Paparazzi’s origins,” 27 Sept., p. 6). Earlier in the month it occurred to the present French writer that other journals that had remained silent on the subject so far might welcome correct information. The editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* did (“The First Paparazzo,” 12 Sept., p. 17) and the *Wakefield Express* used in part a letter to the editor in “Paparazzi is Gissing’s” (26 Sept., p. 13). In Italy letters from the present Italian writer were published in *L’Esagono of Seregno* (“Paparazzi’: come nasce una parola ora usata in tutto il mondo,” 15 Sept., p. 18), in both the Reggio and Messina issues of *Gazzetta del Sud* (“Lettere: I paparazzi vengono da Catanzaro,” 19 Sept., p. 2), *Panorama* of Milan (“Lettere: Perché si chiamano paparazzi,” 25 Sept., p. 5), and *Giornale di Merate, Supplement E20*

Cultura ("Lettera," 30 Sept., p. 3). Although a very appropriate letter was sent by Bouwe Postmus to the editor of the leading Dutch daily, *NRC Handelsblad*, it was in a review by Lucas Ligtenberg of "Il Paparazzo – I Paparazzi," a photo exhibition in New York, that the correct explanation was given on 12 September ("Alleen Diana's foto is niet to koop").

If there is still a missing link in the chain of events, it must be at the start, between Gissing and Fellini. In the 1950s Cappelli, the Bologna firm, brought out a very successful series of distinguished books called "Universale Cappelli, serie Lettere ed Arti," No. 8 being *By the*

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Ionian Sea, brilliantly translated as *Sulla riva dello Jonio* by Margherita Guidacci. The volume appeared in December 1957, that is six months before the entry dated "June 1958" in "Fogli di via Veneto (I)," a section in Flaiano's book. Discriminating Italian readers valued Cappelli's daintily produced series, and Gissing's title was a very good seller – the manager of the firm told us in 1973 that they had sold 30,000 copies so far. Margherita Guidacci's translation has been re-printed in a slightly revised form, edited by Mauro Francesco Minervino – and can now be obtained as *Sulle rive dello Jonio: Un vittoriano al Sud* (no. 12 in the series "Viaggi e Avventura") under the imprint of EDT Edizioni di Torino (19, Via Alfieri, 10121 Torino). The book is also, as it should be, available in English (Marlboro-Northwestern, distributed in England by Turnaround), in French (Presses Universitaires du Septentrion) and in Japanese (Shubun International and Iwanami Shoten). There the genuine, the first Paparazzo, awaits the reader. True, he still has to be identified a little more accurately than he is in Gissing's volume proper, but we very much hope to succeed in this new quest before long. Somehow, a man whose name has met with such an exceptional fate deserves to be better known. This development might be more pleasant to the present-day Paparazzos (in 1982 there were 17 of them listed in the Catanzaro telephone directory, and 2 in Siderno in 1993), than the uncontrollable semantic vagaries they can only have watched with concern.

[Thanks are due to the friends and correspondents who generously sent us information: Karina Of, Wulfhard Stahl, Ros Stinton, Patrick Larkin and Anthony Petyt.]

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"Far, Far Away": George Gissing's Passion for the Classics

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[This is an abstract of the M.A. thesis referred to in our number for April 1997, p. 35.]

It is a well-known fact for Gissing readers that Gissing had two principal interests, one in the modern world and the other in the ancient. The former gave him inspiration for novel-writing; the latter led him to pursue a classical education for the rest of his life. Now, what is worthy of note is that Gissing started on his career as a novelist and resumed his study

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of the classics almost at the same time, and both were carried on simultaneously until his death in 1903. Is it not natural, then, that his passion for the classics and his stern determination to write novels should influence each other? With this in mind, I tried to seek, in my M.A. Dissertation, a relationship between his urge to write fiction and his passion for the classics.

I divided Gissing's literary career into four periods, and gave a chapter to each of them. Chapter One deals with his passion for the classics during his positivist phase, which lasted approximately from 1878 to 1882. We find Gissing starting off on his writing career, and resuming his classical studies. At that period, Gissing was optimistic about the power of literature, both ancient and modern, to uplift humanity and society. He wrote *Workers in the Dawn* "to bring home to people the ghastly condition (material, mental & moral) of our poor classes, to show the hideous injustice of our whole system of society, to give light upon the plan of altering it, &, above all, to preach an enthusiasm for just & high ideals in this age of unmitigated egotism & 'shop'" (letter to Algernon, 3 November 1880, *The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, vol. I, p. 307). He also undertook intensive classical studies, "reading nothing but Greek & Latin" (letter to Ellen, 17 July 1882, *Collected Letters*, vol. II, p. 95), and looked forward "to a day when something of the civic spirit of old Greece shall animate one & all of our towns" (letter to Algernon, 30 January 1881, *Collected Letters*, vol. II, p. 11).

Chapter Two examines his passion for Antiquity during the working-class novel period that came after he had abandoned positivism. In the works produced during those years, there are hardly any direct references to the classics, and his love of Greek and Latin literature seems to have no relevance to his interest in the writing of working-class novels. Yet, a close analysis of Gissing's works and correspondence reveals that they were related. This odd pairing – writing working-class novels and studying the classics – stemmed from Gissing's strong confidence in himself as a true artist.

Chapter Three deals with the novels written between 1890 and 1895. By this time, Gissing had visited the land of the classics, Italy and Greece, visits which contributed to the growth of both Gissing the novelist and Gissing the classicist. He now shows no constraint in expressing his love for the classics in his novels. During this period, his passion for them went hand in hand with his novel-writing.

Chapter four deals with the years between 1895 and 1903. This period saw the demise of the three-volume novel. Gissing knew, albeit unconsciously, that the novels of the commercial

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age were not an apt place for the expression of his passionate interest in the classics, and he wrote somewhat lighter-hearted novels, which show no evidence of it. However, the strengthening of imperialism and jingoism made him gradually lose interest in the modern world, thus cooling his eagerness to write:

I have got into such a loathing of the present world that I could not write about it just now (letter to Wells, 21 April 1899, *Collected Letters*, vol. VII, p. 342).

The situation fuelled Gissing's passion for the classics, which became his haven of refuge from reality. The simultaneous rise of his interest in the classics and the ebbing of his interest in novel-writing urged him to renounce novels of contemporary life and turn to other genres. Gissing thus came to write a travel narrative, a semi-autobiography, and a historical novel – but no novel comparable in quality to his earlier works.

This dissertation shows that Gissing's passion for the classics – a subject which has unjustly been neglected since Samuel Vogt Gapp's *George Gissing, Classicist* (1936) – was a major controlling factor for Gissing the novelist. If we define art as "an expression, satisfying and abiding, of the zest of life," as does Gissing in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903), it becomes clear that Gissing's "zest of life" was his fervent appreciation of the classics, and those works in which he gave full expression to it are his best works of art.

I feel it singularly fortunate that the publication of *The Collected Letters of George*

Gissing was completed just in time for my dissertation. This enabled me to have recourse to Gissing's own words, in his own letters, for proof of his prolonged interest in classical studies. My next project will be to study the classics themselves in order to delve more deeply into this subject.

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Book Review

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.

Volume Nine of the *Collected Letters* records the final phase of Gissing's life, from October 1902 until his death on 28 December 1903. The letters by and to Gissing are

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considerably fewer in number than in previous volumes, partly because the output diminishes, but principally because there are other and varied obligations which this, as a final volume, needs to meet. The editors print three important appendices: "Letters Posthumous and Consolatory," "Letters Recovered After Publication" and "Gabrielle Fleury's Recollections of George Gissing." Also included are invaluable cumulative lists of items from Volumes One to Nine: recipients of letters by Gissing, letters to Gissing and miscellaneous letters and illustrations used in the volumes. There are also indexes of "Persons," "Titles, Places and Miscellanea" and a list of "Corrigenda and Addenda."

Little, in short, has been overlooked. The editors' reputation for thoroughness, widely praised in reviews of the successive volumes of the *Collected Letters*, as they have appeared, and formally recognised by the MLA in 1995 when it awarded the editors the Morton N. Cohen Award for a Distinguished Edition of Letters, is impressively sustained here. What is equally impressive, not to say astonishing, is that Paul Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young and Pierre Coustillas have completed this nine-volume work within a mere eight years. While the use of faxes makes the exchange of typescripts easier, Martha Vogeler (one of the guiding spirits behind the whole project) has recently reminded us that "no one should underestimate the problems [the editors] encountered and solved while writing their introductions and notes and doing the proofreading, separated from each other by considerable distances" (*Gissing Journal*, January 1996, p. 3).

The pull exerted by the appendices is considerable. An effect of the collection of consolatory letters to Gabrielle is to illuminate both the extent of the respect and affection in which Gissing was held, and Gabrielle's own importance for Gissing during the final years of his life. Among the most moving of these letters is one from Eduard Bertz. We read Bertz with the knowledge that of all Gissing's friends it was he who engaged Gissing's creative imagination most powerfully. The experience of reading through their correspondence in these volumes since 1889 (the friendship dated back to 1879), somehow, of itself, vindicates a *Collected Letters*, if vindication were needed. It is precisely because we now have the humdrum and the dutiful that the significance of this particular correspondence can be measured. To Gabrielle, Bertz writes with an emotional honesty and truthfulness which characteristically puts her relationship with Gissing in the most sympathetic light: "you entered into his existence as a kind spirit and he was able to resign himself to death through the power of your love." In

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common with the other rationalists of Gissing's acquaintance, Morley Roberts and Clodd, he expresses his outrage at the "rape of a mortally exhausted and debilitated will" by "the English priest" (we have letters from all the participants in the controversy, including the Rev. Cooper himself and Mrs. Bayman, the nurse at Gissing's bedside) and he is unshakeable in his determination that none of his letters to Gissing should "fall into strange hands" – Gissing's mother and sisters at Wakefield. Bertz also hopes that Gissing's letters to him might be published. As the editors recall (in their introduction to Volume One) it was unfortunate that four years after Gissing's death Constable did not pursue the idea of an edition since a good many were subsequently lost or destroyed. The letters to Bertz were, of course, eventually edited in 1961 by Arthur C. Young, so inaugurating a new phase in the attention to Gissing's life and thought.

Young's volume was one of several important collections, including Gissing's correspondence with Wells, Hick, Edith Sichel and Hudson, to be published from the 1960s, and all the more precious for scholars in the absence of a comprehensive edition. Now the *Collected Letters* add to the story by bringing together letters which have been reprinted, at various times, by Pierre Coustillas and others in this and other journals, but which now find their proper place alongside the better-known letters. Those to Morley Roberts and Clara Collet, as well as those to his agents, W. M. Colles and James B. Pinker, are of particular interest. Publication of the letters to Collet, for instance, confirms the editors' judgment, in their Introduction to Volume Eight, that the position she occupied, in Gissing's life from the mid-1890s, and posthumously, was "strategic."

Despite the sheer volume of Gissing's correspondence it is salutary to be reminded that the letters collected in these nine volumes represent only a part of Gissing's total output. As the editors have frankly acknowledged, many more letters than they have been able to trace must have been written to figures like Henry James, James Payn and Eliza Orme; it is, of course, partly on the basis of the small number of letters which do survive that the appetite is whetted. Moreover, there are important figures such as John Davidson, M^énie Muriel Dowie, and James Barrie, who were recipients of letters from Gissing, as confirmed by other printed sources. None of these letters has so far come to light; evidence enough, if any were needed, of the frustrations attendant upon an editorial project of this scope. Yet on the positive side the *Collected Letters* has clearly benefited from the careful husbandry of the three principal manuscript collections in

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the United States, the Beinecke at Yale and the Berg and Pforzheimer collections at the New York Public Library, together with the collections in private hands of collectors like C. C. Kohler, John Spiers and Waring Jones. All this, and more, was set out by the editors in the opening volume, back in 1990; they voiced the hope, then, that some of the missing letters might come to light.

Of those which have emerged too late to be slotted into the appropriate volume and have now been gathered together in one of the appendices, among the most significant is a letter from his father, Thomas Waller Gissing, to the seven-year-old George on holiday with the rest of the family at his great-aunt's, in which we can detect a strong paternal influence. Father gently chides eldest son for committing eight spelling errors in a letter he has written to him, interprets the names of a flower for the benefit of George's great-aunt – "Tell Aunty the flower she found is the *Marsh Mallow* (Latin name *Althaea officinalis*)" – and underscores his pleasure at the evident kindness shown to his son with a kindly and ethically-freighted mixture of observation and advice: "you see everybody is kind to you where you are & so all people, worth thinking about, always will be if you are a good boy & grow into a good brave man, always doing & saying what is Truth & Right..." Readers of the later volumes will be irresistibly drawn to Gissing's letters to his own son Walter with their encouragement to collect and press flowers

and their concern with high standards in school work and conduct.

Among the most interesting new items is a letter to Algernon from 1884 describing a fearful but exhilarating day's climbing in the Lake District in the mountains which inspired Scott's "Helvellyn," a letter from Gissing at 17 to his grandfather announcing that he has come top in England in his Latin and English examinations – only weeks before first meeting Nell Harrison – and a wonderfully cutting critique of the deficiencies of contemporary literary reviewing in a letter of 1886 to the publisher Walter Scott. These are some of the unexpected pleasures of the collection which take us back in a loop, as it were, to the early volumes, allowing us to savour once more the flavour of Gissing's boyhood and youth.

In April 1903, with nine months of his life left, Gissing admitted to Bertz that he was "losing combative force." Throughout the first half of the year he was racked with sciatica, and chronically short of sleep. The move 30 miles inland to Ispoure near Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port at the end of June promised respite, and within weeks he reports that his health is improving, yet a consequence was that he was now cut off from the agreeable society of educated Englishmen

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such as an Oxford academic, H. Butler Clarke, an authority on Basque civilisation, Wentworth Webster or Stuart-Menteath, a geologist. In her "Recollections," published here for the first time, Gabrielle confirms that she and Gissing had access to at least a dozen educated English residents living around Saint-Jean-de-Luz who would certainly have regretted his enforced departure to what Wells would be driven to describe, intemperately, as "a wretched little town-village up in the hills." Clarke, for one, asks Gissing tactfully whether there is "any chance of seeing you nearer here," and informs him of a vacant house which he might rent.

The waning of that "combative force" as the letters progress is evident enough: not only the loss of health, but the overwhelming fact of it – to the increasing exclusion of all that made life tolerable. While Gissing put up with the ménage of Gabrielle and her chronically-ill mother as best he could, it is clear that he sees, increasingly, little prospect of release. It is difficult not to agree with the editors' judgment that Gissing was well aware that "some fatal development might come at any moment" and that "if death were to come soon, it would be welcome."

Encouraged by Wells, Gissing still nurtured hopes that he might be able to travel to England, if he could survive another winter, to enjoy the esteem in which he was increasingly held, in the wake of the publication of the *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* ("you are the most respectable & respected of novelists next to Hardy Meredith & James. You should come & savour it," wrote Wells). But all the physical facts told against such a plan. A worrying sign is Gissing's evident loss of interest in the future of Walter; his now very occasional letters suggest that he has nothing left to offer him other than the same old advice. For the first time Walter fails to thank his father for his birthday present (a fishing-rod). Gissing writes to his son on Christmas Eve 1902, controlling his irritation, but all the while, one feels, depressed at his own inability to influence events – in any direction. By the time Walter's next birthday comes round (his twelfth) it is his father who has ceased to write, having contracted the fatal attack of double pneumonia the week before.

It is notable, however, that Gissing's intellectual curiosity never wanes: he learns Spanish so that he may read Cervantes in the original, and later, as his physical immobility increases and his capacity for writing diminishes, he reads several historical novels by Galdós. He is in touch all the while with James, Hardy and Conrad. He greets *Typhoon* with warm praise as he does

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Morley Roberts's latest, *Rachel Marr*. His generous but properly critical spirit never deserts him (although he continues to show a blind spot, fascinating in itself, for Hardy's later fiction). He

subjects Wells's *Mankind in the Making* to a careful critique, surely a book that did not run easily with the grain. When asked by the *Academy and Literature* to nominate his favourite books of 1903 Gissing puts forward all three titles; yet, as the editors note, none of the other authors who contributed, including Wells, Conrad, Gosse, Harrison and Shorter, nominated Gissing's *Ryecroft*, despite its evident high standing. With the dispatch of the manuscript of *Will Warburton* he turns to researching his historical romance, *Veranilda*.

To the end he is the consummate professional writer. And we are reminded strikingly of what that means, and has always meant, for Gissing when, a month before his death, with *Veranilda* still several chapters from completion, he agrees to do a short story, at James Pinker's suggestion, for the *Daily Mail*. Gissing writes a postcard back: "A terrible interruption, but I will do the *D. M.* story, for I agree with you that it may be worth while. You shall receive MS. not later than *Thursday* next." Gissing wrote this on Saturday 28th November. Gabrielle's "Recollections" read: "Did it, however in 2 days: the 28 & 29 Nov, & resumed his novel the day after..." The following Saturday he "ceased to work, having some headache & giddiness." Gissing's writing was at an end, with *Veranilda* five chapters short. This episode seems to condense so much about the exposed position of the working novelist: it reads, as so much of Gissing's life reads, like an episode from his own great novel on the subject of the "trade of the damned."

Gabrielle's account of the final days in her "Reminiscences" is an extraordinary coda, suggesting something of the felt life of those last days at the bedside, of which the epistolary record, itself, is necessarily sparse, reduced as it is to the telegraphese of crisis in which messages fly frantically between Gabrielle, Wells and Roberts – the raw data of the chaos which is the end.

The whole edition is a superb example of editorial practice and collaboration. It is quite clearly a landmark in Gissing studies and a resource of the first importance for the study of late-Victorian literary culture. The letters allow us an absorbing, and at times, moving relationship with a man who despite the perversities of his personal life, and his immovable cultural fantasies and blind spots, exerted in the face of declining health a wonderful toughness of mind in preserving nothing but the highest standards as a writer and as a friend.

William Greenslade, University of the West of England

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Notes and News

The most important piece of news that has reached us is the announcement on p. 1. More detailed information will be given in forthcoming numbers of the *Journal*, and the Gissing Conference will also be advertised in such academic journals and newsletters as carry this kind of communication.

Reviews of the *Collected Letters* continue to appear. Among the most gratifying in the last six months are those by David Grylls in *Notes and Queries*, D. J. Taylor in the *TLS* and Anthony Quinn in the *Daily Telegraph*. Of the excellent one by Jonathan Keates in the *Spectator* we heard only months after publication. Keates concludes: "The entire nine volumes represent a tribute any writer might envy. They are certainly the noblest ever paid to George Gissing."

Three volumes variously related to Gissing studies have been sent us. *Un pensiero da Paola: Cartoline (1900-1940)* is a beautifully produced book, the illustrations of which capture the atmosphere of the Italian seaside town as Gissing discovered it in November 1897. This is especially true of the postcards that were for sale before the earthquake which took place on 8 September 1905. The pick of the bunch is probably the view of the Piazza Canello with its

fountain – the people watching the photographer help one to imagine those who looked at Gissing curiously as he walked to the top of the town before making his way to Cosenza. Andrea Lorenzelli and Teresa Carovano are the happy owners of the collection which has now been made public. The essay by Dr. Mauro Francesco Minervino (pp. 15-26), “Un paese con un nome di donna,” manages to be at once well informed and lyrical. This is a very suitable book for a present (Paola (CS): Publiepa Edizioni, Via Rione Croce 171. Lire 28,000. ISBN 88-87-104-00-X). Readers of *By the Ionian Sea* who can read Italian and wish to know more about Cassiodorus, can turn to a big book containing the sixteen papers that were read at the International Symposium held at Squillace, 25-27 October 1990 – all devoted to aspects of Cassiodorus’ life and activities. The volume, entitled *Cassiodoro: Dalla corte di Ravenna al Vivarium di Squillace*, clothbound with a dustjacket, is No. II in the Bibliotheca Vivariensis (Soveria Mannelli (Catanzaro): Rubbettino, Viale dei Pini, 8. Lire 100,000. ISBN 88-7284-088-0). Not unlike the book on Paola is *Wakefield in old picture postcards* by John Goodchild, the Wakefield archivist (Zaltbommel, Netherlands: European Library). 108 postcards and

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photographs are reproduced in it. A good many of them show streets and buildings with which Gissing was familiar: aspects of Westgate, the Market Place, Kirkgate, Northgate, Wentworth Terrace, Sandal Road, Doncaster Road, Agbrigg Road, Heath Common, the Cattle Market, the Grammar School, Sandal Castle, the Cathedral and its first bishop, William Walsham How, as well as his palace. This red cloth book, published in 1990, is now said to be out of print.

The German translation of *The Odd Women* by Karina Of, which appeared a few weeks ago, is one of those volumes the publication of which was totally unexpected. The decision to include this title (no. 15) in the Ars Vivendi Bibliothek was, we are told, the publishers’; the translator was thus given an opportunity to discover Gissing’s works. Ars Vivendi Verlag having sold the rights of paperback publication to another firm, we can confidently expect to see a new edition in two years’ time. Frau Of is a professional translator and she hopes to complete this autumn and winter a translation of *The Nether World* she has only just begun, but that will be only after she has finished translating a modern American novel. Gissing is in good company in the Ars Vivendi Bibliothek. Among other English and American writers in it are Charlotte Brontë (*The Professor*), George Eliot (*Silas Marner*), Elizabeth Gaskell (*The Life of Charlotte Brontë*), Thomas Hardy (*A Pair of Blue Eyes*) and Henry James (*In the Cage* and *Transatlantic Sketches*). The publishers’ address is: Ars Vivendi Verlag, Postfach 9,90553 Cadolzburg, Germany.

The most substantial article that appeared in the summer is that by B. B. Coleman in *Book and Magazine Collector* (no. 161). Mr. Coleman is a book collector and bibliographer and he has certainly done Gissing a service in publishing his article in a journal with a circulation between 10 and 12,000 (£2.50 per issue; address: 43-45 St. Mary’s Road, Ealing, London W5 5RQ). Strangely Gissing appears here between Enid Blyton and James Thurber, and only the September number will tell us whether the previous 160 carry anything on him, for the index to all back issues in the present one is only concerned with the end of the alphabet, covering L-Z. It is interesting to see that some of Gissing’s acquaintances, friends and admirers were dealt with in the last thirteen or fourteen years, for instance Meredith (no. 108), Orwell (nos. 64, 106 and 155), Quiller-Couch (no. 99), Norman Douglas (no. 87) and H. G. Wells (nos. 19, 20, 54, 89 and 136).

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Mr. Coleman's article is a straightforward account of Gissing's life and achievements, illustrated with the top part of Rothenstein's lithograph, the title-page of *Workers in the Dawn*, a *Strand Magazine* drawing that accompanied "A Despot on Tour," the front cover by GWE of the first American edition of *The Town Traveller* and the front cover of the Harvester edition of *Born in Exile*. However he begins in a way which, at least for the benefit of the editor of this journal, would have been worthy of a footnote: "It has often been said of Gissing that more time is devoted to interpreting and writing about his works than is actually expended on reading them." Perhaps Mr. Coleman has heard the story of a collector (unfortunately deceased) whose wife mildly remarked that it was the inside, rather than the outside, of books that matters. Actually that admirable collector was passionately interested in both. But the article does not go on in this strain. Save for a few details like that concerning Gissing's first academic feat, the account of his life is a reliable one, written by a commentator who is in sympathy with his subject and has obviously been looking for his books in not a few London and provincial bookshops. No one will quarrel with the presentment of *Workers* as "a legendary rarity" nor with the judgment passed on GWE's performance mentioned above, but it cannot be said that "Mrs. Grundy's Enemies" was in Gissing's opinion a successor to *The Unclassed*, since the first version of it was completed in December 1882, and while it is true that *The Unclassed* was remaindered, the three volumes being bound in one, some collectors will object to the statement "casebound in red cloth," since similar copies in blue cloth are in existence. As time passes some unsuspected bibliographical complexities come to light, and Mr. Coleman's remark that the Harvester Press editions are now becoming collectable in their own right is perhaps truer than most collectors would believe. The various editions and their binding variants still have to be described, a task which will be done by the present writer. Emphatically right is Mr. Coleman again about the scarcity of *Human Odds and Ends*, a "difficult" book for collectors, but even booksellers who are not afraid of big prices occasionally offer copies, especially of the 1901, 1911 and 1915 editions, for less than £100. Whether Gissing was or was not at his best in the genre of short fiction is a matter of opinion. Many better known writers would not have been sorry, one suspects, of adding "The Day of Silence," "The Scrupulous Father" and "A Daughter of the Lodge" to the list of their publications. In at least one place tantalizing information is offered which would be worth documenting. "The first edition [of *Henry Ryecroft*]," we read,

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"now sells for up to £100 in the original green cloth. Some copies are dated '1902,' although these are extremely rare. Indeed, an example offered by a London dealer in 1993 was said to be the first to surface in seventy years." Could this be the copy once in the possession of Thomas Secombe? Occasionally Mr. Coleman's information, biographical or bibliographical, is slightly deficient. Thus Gabrielle Fleury did not visit Henry James together with Gissing and Wells, and *Henry Ryecroft* was not the author's first title to appear in paperback. What of *The Town Traveller*, *The Unclassed*, *The Crown of Life*, and *Our Friend the Charlatan*? We must also be allowed to disagree with John Halperin's judgment (approved of unreservedly by Mr. Coleman) that the least convincing of Gissing's novels are those that are least autobiographical. Christina Sjöholm exploded that myth some years ago. But these reservations vanish when we reach the last paragraph of the article – it shows its author's deep understanding of and sympathy with Gissing.

The guide to current values of Gissing's books (pp. 27-28) will reward close study and prompt many sighs. Experience is bound to vary in many ways among collectors. It is true that the prices of three-deckers have risen alarmingly in the last twenty years. Perhaps it would be difficult to get a first edition of *Workers* in very good condition for less than £5,000; perhaps also a set of *The Unclassed* is likely to cost you £1,250-£1,500, but you will be unlucky if you have to pay as much as £300-£400 for the first one-volume edition (Lawrence and Bullen, 1895).

By and large, some of the prices suggested seem a little high (those of the first one-volume editions of the three-deckers when they happen to be listed), while others are very low – for instance all the Harvester titles and the old World’s Classics edition of *New Grub Street* (1958), but any Gissing collector would agree that he bought some uncommon editions for a song and that he was frightened out of a few London bookshops by some steep prices for scarce editions. Compiling the information on those last two pages must have been an uphill task and one would not be surprised to hear that the editor of the *Book and Magazine Collector* has received a sizeable batch of mail on the subject. Many questions occur to one as one reads this list carefully: what about the small red-cloth editions of the five Smith, Elder titles? What about the yellowbacks and other cheap reprints? The many new editions of the interwar years? Obviously no space was available for all these, although luckily some was found for a selection of short stories in bound periodicals, all of them reasonably priced. The most puzzling problem is likely to remain that of the dustjackets. Careful reading of this “George Gissing UK Bibliography”

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(which several times extends beyond the UK) and of the list of prices suggested for copies without/with dustjackets leads one to think that the most difficult problem to solve by Gissing’s bibliographers consists in determining which editions were published in dustjackets. Lest any collectors should be misled, it can at least be asserted that not all the Harvester editions were issued in this garb. Clearly Mr. Coleman has raised more points than can be discussed within a couple of pages.

Japanese subscribers may like to know that John Pemble’s remarkable book, *The Mediterranean Passion* (1987), in which Gissing is so frequently quoted, has now been published in translation by Kobunsha of Tokyo. The ISBN number is 4-7720-0443-2. It is a pity the English paperback edition is out of print and O.U.P. apparently in no hurry to reissue it.

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Recent Publications

Volumes

George Gissing, *Die überzähligen Frauen (The Odd Women)*, translated by Karina Of, Cadolzburg: Ars Vivendi Verlag, 1997. Rusty red cloth with gilt titling. Pictorial dust-jacket featuring a typist behind a half-open window in a brick wall. 408 pages. DM 39.80. ISBN 3-931043-63-0.

Eduard Bertz, *Philosophie des Fahrrads*. Mit einem Anhang neu herausgegeben von Wulfhard Stahl. Paderborn: Snayder Verlag, 1997. 265 pages. DM 29.80. ISBN 3-932319-09-5. Grey card covers with a cartoon on the back showing the *Bicyclanthropos curvatus*. Bertz’s book proper is followed by four articles on sporting matters which he published in various newspapers, a 13-page Who’s Who in the book, an editorial note, a chronology of Bertz’s life with a portrait of him in July 1895, and an afterword.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Martin Garrett, *Greece: A Literary Companion*, London: John Murray, 1994. Gissing is quoted three times.

D. J. Enright, *Interplay: A Kind of Commonplace Book*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. The author expresses his admiration for *New Grub Street*, essentially through quotations (pp. 77-79).

Jonathan Keates, "Romancing with Wretchedness," *Spectator*, 5 April 1997, p. 36. Review of Volume 9 of the *Collected Letters*.

Anthony Quinn, "History's most ill-advised marriage," *Daily Telegraph* (Arts and Books Section), 14 June 1997, p. A2. Another review of Volume 9 of the *Collected Letters*, with a 1901 Elliott and Fry portrait of Gissing. Anthony Quinn also published a review of D. J. Taylor's Everyman edition of *New Grub Street* in the *Financial Times* (Weekend FT) on 19 July ("Rereadings: An ode to life by the pen," p. V).

Shigeru Koike, "[Book Review]", *Eigo Seinen* (The Rising Generation), Vol. 143, no. 5, 1 August 1997, p. 275. Review article on the nine volumes of *Collected Letters*.

B. B. Coleman, "George Gissing: Interest is growing in this underrated Victorian novelist," *Book Collector and Magazine*, no. 161, August 1997, pp. 18-28. The article proper – a survey of Gissing's life and career, is followed by a two-page "Guide to current values of first editions in Very Good condition in the original cloth without/with dustjackets."

Bouwe Postmus, "Als balling geboren: George Gissing (1857-1903), romanschrijver," *Rekenschap, Tijdschrift voor wetenschap en cultuur*, September 1997, pp. 171-179. The article is followed by a reprint of "A Poor Gentleman," with an introduction by André Hielkema, pp. 180-90.

Martha S. Vogeler, "Gissing Letters, 9," *English Literature in Transition*, Vol. 40 (1997), no. 4, pp.466-69.

Raimund Schäffner, *Anarchismus und Literatur in England: Von der Französischen Revolution bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1997. Chapter 4, section 3 (pp. 144-56) is devoted to "George Gissing: *Workers in the Dawn* (1880) und *Demos* (1886)."

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Subscriptions

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

Rates per annum are as follows:

Private subscribers: £10.00

Libraries: £15.00

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

Payment should be made in sterling to *The Gissing Journal*, by cheque or international money order sent to:

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7 Town Lane, Idle, Bradford BD10 8PR, England.

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Information for Contributors

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

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

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