

THE GISSING JOURNAL

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

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Lost Illusions and the Will to Die in *New Grub Street*

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Gissing wrote six novels between finishing *The Unclassed* and beginning *New Grub Street*. In all of these, with the exception of *The Nether World*, he focuses on different aspects of the downtrodden intellectual’s plight. For example, in *Isabel Clarendon* (1886), he describes the intellectual isolation of the “unclassed” idealist Bernard Kingcote and his love for an upper-class country lady. In *Demos* (1886), Gissing contrasts the socially-deposed intellectual, Hubert Eldon, with the working-class socialist, Richard Mutimer, who has inherited property that should have gone to Eldon. Although the loss of the inheritance forestalls Eldon’s hopes of marrying into middle-class respectability, in opposition to Mutimer and his socialist scheme, he is seen in a superior light, simply because of Mutimer’s working-class origins. Even when Mutimer sets up a co-operative mining community, the aesthetic idealist Eldon views this humanitarian enterprise with Schopenhauerian scorn because of Mutimer’s indiscriminate spoliation of nature.

In his next published novels, *Thyrza* (1887) and *A Life’s Morning* (1888), Gissing reverts to more typical portrayals of downtrodden intellectuals. Only in *The Nether World* (1889), does

he focus purely on working-class life. It is the bleakest of his novels, written after learning of the wretched death of his first wife in a London slum. It is also the last novel in which Gissing directly represents the working-class world. In his next novel, *The Emancipated* (1890), and thereafter, Gissing problematises the bohemian intellectual's relation to the middle-class world. Consequently, if in the earlier novels he is concerned to show the social isolation and frustration of the downtrodden intellectual amidst working-class scenes, from now on he is preoccupied

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with stressing the difficulty of social mobility between classes. This is especially evident in *New Grub Street*, which, in contrast to *The Unclassed*, presents the archetypal bohemian hero in a far gloomier mood.

Written towards the end of 1890 and published in April 1891, *New Grub Street*, despite its pessimism, is to-day the most widely appreciated of Gissing's three-decker novels, perhaps because of its trenchantly faithful account of the contemporary literary world. It is, above all, rich in historical detail. "*New Grub Street* is far more directly informative," Bernard Bergonzi writes, "in a social-historical way than most Victorian novels" (*New Grub Street*, Penguin, p. 10). For instance Gissing gives an insider's view of the novelist's bondage to the three-decker novel, at the same time throwing light on the power of the lending libraries, on the unscrupulousness of publishers, and on the unrewarding side of novel-writing in a fiercely competitive literary market. He also describes the rise of the popular press, of popular magazines such as *Tit-Bits*, and of the cultural move towards mass readership. For many critics, including Bergonzi, the real interest in *New Grub Street* nevertheless lies in what they see as the correlations between the lives and opinions of Gissing's characters and his own life. Clearly, there are autobiographical elements in this novel, and more so than in any other of Gissing's novels. Q. D. Leavis, perhaps, comes closer to the mark when she writes, "The subject was both inside and outside him" (1989, p. 267). For all that, it is a mistake to attribute *in toto*, as many critics do, the opinions of some of his characters to Gissing himself. It is still more illogical to attribute the profound pessimism of *New Grub Street* to a deep-seated moroseness in Gissing's character. Such critics are palpably unable to free themselves from their historical present. After all, approaching our own *fin de siècle*, how does one account for the pessimism about the environment expressed by many contemporary novelists such as J. G. Ballard, Arthur C. Clarke, and Tom Wolfe?

As much literature of the late Victorian era reveals, Gissing's contemporaries were also possessed with spiritual doubts, and pessimism about the future of mankind. The end of the nineteenth-century is, therefore, with some justification called "the Age of Pessimism." But whence this all-pervading existential gloom? As it happens there were a number of causes. The chief cause was Charles Darwin's "theory of evolution," published in 1859 in his book *On the Origin of Species*, which had a shock wave effect once the theory began to gain wide acceptance. This book, and its successor *The Descent of Man* (1871), completely overturned the established

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view of man's hierarchical place in the universe, and represented the first serious challenge to the authority of the Bible. The result was a decline in religious faith, as masses of intellectuals were seized with spiritual doubts.

In the course of time many intellectuals sought solace in the philosophy of Schopenhauer, now belatedly achieving currency. Certainly throughout this period his pessimistic philosophy with its idealisation of the artistic imagination became the panacea for man's spiritual emptiness. This partly accounts for the manifestation of a pessimistic world view in the novels of Thomas Hardy, W. H. Mallock, George Moore, Arnold Bennett and Somerset Maugham. As C. J. Francis

suggests, Schopenhauer's "influence probably explains the peculiarly subdued note found in the pessimism of many even of the most vigorous of realistic novels" (1960, p. 63).

However, a further cause of the widespread spiritual malaise was the end of the century phenomenon known as "endism". This tendency or condition constitutes a kind of existential angst, best described as an indefinable sense of an ending to things, especially in relation to historical cycles. Elaine Showalter maintains that "the crises of the *fin de siècle* ... are more intensely experienced, more emotionally fraught, more weighted with symbolic and historical meaning" (1990, p. 2). If so, then the late Victorian intellectual's sense of crisis would have been aggravated by the implications of Darwin's "theory of evolution" and the subsequent decline in the Christian faith. For late Victorian man was witness to the end of a two thousand year tradition of almost unquestioned belief in Christianity.

One can also ascribe, in part, a sense of foreboding to the contemporaneous rise of the working classes. As Gissing novels indicate, among the middle classes and the upper classes there were definite fears that a revolution by the working classes was imminent. Indeed, in February 1886, during the period of rioting in Trafalgar Square, many thought their fears had become reality. It is a curious coincidence that Gissing's novel about the threat of socialism, *Demos*, was written just prior to these socialist riots. What this demonstrates is that Gissing was in tune with the mood of his day. Anton Weber elaborates:

Gissing was seriously preoccupied with the various philosophical ideas and general spiritual streams of his time ... His novels are filled with allusions to the spiritual happenings of his time. (1932, p. 47, my translation)

As this signifies it is misleading to see Gissing's pessimism in isolation from his historical moment. Moreover, it is unpardonable to ascribe his pessimism wholly to his "temperament," as

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David Grylls does, and for this reason to criticise the sombre mood of his novels (1984, p. 61). This is to undervalue Gissing's novels by failing to see them in their ideological context unencumbered with biographical correspondences. Undoubtedly Gissing's personal problems contributed to his pessimistic outlook, but as Weber pointed out, his pessimism essentially had its source in a number of cultural "streams." As for his characters it should be observed that, for example, Reardon's and Biffen's pessimism in *New Grub Street* is not Gissing's, otherwise he would have ended as they did.

New Grub Street, alongside *Born in Exile*, is a central novel in Gissing's career, which reflects many of the dominant social problems and attitudes of the late Victorian era in its representation of the contemporary literary environment. The title recalls the Grub Street of Samuel Johnson's day, where in dire poverty literary hacks tried to make their living. As Gissing explains, "The name has become synonymous for wretched-authorship" (Young, 1961, p. 122). In the novel he gives a realistic picture of the unrelenting struggle that is often the writer's life. Ever aware of the topical, he describes the lives of a variety of downtrodden and aspiring writers according to the theory of Social Darwinism. In other words, Gissing demonstrates in his characteristics that success in the literary arena depends on whether one is weak or strong—is, in fact, a matter of the survival of the fittest.

The main comparison in *New Grub Street* is between the characters of Jasper Milvain and of Edwin Reardon: the one being portrayed as strong, the other as weak. The Balzacian plot, intimating Gissing's debt to the Continental novel, has both Milvain and Reardon as young provincials who come to London, at different times, to make their fortunes. In his chapter "On the Suffering of the World" Schopenhauer writes "Work, worry, toil and trouble are indeed the lot of almost all men their whole life long" (Schopenhauer, 1970, p. 43). In describing the plight

of his Grub Street writers Gissing emphasises the poverty, the “toil,” the “worry,” and the lonely frustration that is their lot in the fight for survival in the literary battlefield. Milvain, who sees himself as the modern man of his day, is naturally adaptable; as he tells his sisters, “I’m a stronger man than Reardon” (p. 37). Milvain is practical, assertive, and willing to make any moral or intellectual concession to obtain the main chance. In this respect he anticipates, in embryo, the Nietzschean morality of Godwin Peak in *Born in Exile*. Despite his initial financial difficulties, and the relative slowness of his climb to success, Milvain is not easily discouraged.

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In contrast Reardon is quickly disillusioned by hardship and literary failure. As he acknowledges, and as his wife, Amy, tells him, “You are much weaker than I imagined” (p. 80). A downtrodden intellectual, who should have been a classical scholar, Reardon is unable to adapt to the modern literary climate. Having married a middle-class woman on the strength of an unremunerative literary success, he is soon compelled to write a potboiler in order to keep his family from poverty. But, as Schopenhauer writes, “Every writer writes badly as soon as he starts writing for gain” (p. 199). Accordingly, after tremendous efforts, owing to a sense of impending doom which weakens his will, Reardon is unable to follow his initial success. His bondage to the three-decker novel format, because of the lending libraries’ monopoly, he finds intolerable. Due to his pessimistic outlook, while he and his family sink further into poverty, Reardon succumbs to a mood of unending gloom. As he tells Milvain, “A man has no business to marry unless he has a secured income” (p. 108). Reardon’s unfortunate fate constitutes a lesson frequently encountered in Gissing’s fiction, for example in *Demos*, a moral lesson about the problems that entail when there is a marriage between different classes, a problem compounded by poverty.

Alfred Yule’s marriage to a lower-class woman presents a variation on this problem: he sees his wife as standing in the way of his social advancement. With these examples, Gissing shows how difficult it is for downtrodden intellectuals to marry someone who is their intellectual equal. Unlike Reardon, the other indigent bohemians, Biffen and Whelpdale, can only dream of marriage to a refined and cultured woman. Biffen, like Reardon, is a pessimist who glories in artistic contemplation, while devoting himself to writing the ultimate realist novel “Mr. Bailey, Grocer” (p. 244). But, as the narrator writes, “Biffen was always in dire poverty ... he had seen harder trials than even Reardon” (p. 173). Although resigned to his fate, Biffen is nevertheless a stronger, more resilient character than Reardon, and less given to fits of gloom. Even so, Biffen and Reardon have much in common, besides their “unclassed” status, as he tells Reardon: “You know that by temper we are rabid idealists” (p. 174). Indeed, their aesthetic idealism, their relentless pessimism, and their resignation to a life of endless struggle, they share with Schopenhauer.

Pessimism is the dominant note in Schopenhauer’s philosophy, above all with regard to the will to live. He writes, “The vanity of existence is revealed ... in the continual frustration of striving of which life consists” (Schopenhauer, 1970, p. 51). In other words, the will to live is

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vain in both senses of the word, and motivated by an illusion, for according to Schopenhauer happiness is an illusion. Nonetheless, in *New Grub Street* all the prominent characters at one point or another, in spite of their constant struggles to survive, in the literary arena, their fight with the new young lions of the modern era, cherish hopes and illusions of happiness. For example, when Reardon marries his ideal love, Amy, he has the illusion that her love will bring him great joy and inspire him to literary success. But Reardon has not counted on class distinctions. Faced with early hardships and impending poverty, Amy, having been brought up

in relative middle-class comfort, fails to live up to Reardon's expectations. Unlike her husband, who has necessarily acclimatised himself to hardship, Amy is unwilling to try to adapt to the social conditions that poverty engenders, and so their marriage ends in separation. Yet Amy is a stronger character than Reardon. She does not leave him because she is unable to adapt to an impoverished environment, but because she has accustomed herself to expect more from life than Reardon proves able to offer her. Nevertheless, much later, Amy and Reardon are united by grief. Moreover, Reardon is once again possessed with "the will to live, the prevailing will, the passionate all-conquering desire of happiness" (p. 484).

The long-suffering Alfred Yule is another downtrodden writer who harbours passionate hopes. As he tells his daughter, his "life has been one long bitter struggle" (p. 323). For this reason, and the desire to get revenge against those critics such as Fadge who have attacked him in the past, Yule dreams of acquiring the editorship of a literary journal. But Yule is an ageing writer eaten up with rival jealousy. In social darwinistic terms he is weakened by declining powers, symbolised by his encroaching blindness, which make him vulnerable to attacks by those literary vultures—vicious critics. He is, therefore, no longer able to compete with the younger generation in the literary market. Ironically, Yule's daughter, Marian, "not readily the victim of illusion" herself, falls prey to Milvain, the new type of unconscionable literary journalist (p. 219). In bondage to the British Museum Reading Room as her father's amanuensis, Marian is understandably attracted to the dashing and ambitious Milvain. He represents a way of escape from the "dreariness of life as it lay before her" (p. 137). Yet Milvain, in order to serve his own ambitions, intends to marry into money. As he insensitively tells Marian, "I am cool-headed enough to make society serve my own ends" (p. 333). Although he is not as unprincipled as Godwin Peak in *Born in Exile* or Dyce Lashmar in *Our Friend the Charlatan*,

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Milvain, in his own words "the literary man of 1882," will stop at nothing including deceit and betrayal to achieve his aims (p. 38).

Schopenhauer writes, "Unjust or wicked actions are, in regard to him who performs them, signs of the strength of his affirmation of the will to live" (p. 65). In comparison with Reardon or Biffen, Milvain is the consummate egoist whose will is in the service of his ambitions. "His was the weakness of vanity," the narrator explains, "which sometimes leads a man to commit treacheries of which he would believe himself incapable" (p. 301). For instance, once Marian inherits five thousand pounds, Jasper shows himself in a despicable light to his sister, Dora, when he breathes out those loathsome words, "Just tell me. What has she?" (p. 336). Palpably, Marian's allure for Jasper is not sexual, but financial, such is the vanity of his vaulting ambition.

Biffen's normally placid existence is, in contrast, greatly disturbed by sexual desire after the widowed Amy makes some friendly overtures towards him. In Schopenhauer's philosophy the sexual instinct is the most powerful manifestation of the will to live. As Pierre Coustillas notes, "Biffen yields to the will to live when he falls in love with Reardon's widow" (1970, p. 24). Yet, Biffen's is an unattainable desire, and his awareness of this intensifies his sense of dismay with his plight. An intellectual who, like Reardon, should have been an academic, Biffen is so poor that he is unable to appear even tolerably well dressed before Amy. All the same he becomes obsessed with the thought of her: "to his starved soul and senses she was woman, the complement of his frustrate being" (p. 526). A true pessimist, in keeping with Schopenhauer's view of existence, Biffen eventually perceives the vanity of his desire, and reconciles himself to his fate.

New Grub Street is finally a tale of forlorn hopes and lost illusions, just as it is for the young provincials in Balzac's *Les Illusions Perdues*. The literary arena of 1880s London becomes the burial ground of the old and the weak, of those unable to adapt to the conditions of the new markets. Reardon, Biffen and Alfred Yule would have found their niche in "Sam

Johnson's Grub Street" (p. 39). "But," as Jasper Milvain says, "our Grub Street of to-day is quite a different place" (p. 39). Thus, for all their hopes and dreams, toil and struggles, the lives of the downtrodden writers in Gissing's *New Grub Street* invariably end in disillusion. On this theme Schopenhauer writes:

No man is happy but strives his whole life long after a supposed happiness which he seldom attains, and even if he does it is only to be disappointed

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with it; as a rule, however, he finally enters harbour shipwrecked and dismayed. (Schopenhauer, 1970, p. 52)

Constantly faced with the task of writing to time to keep from starvation, Reardon's grand illusions about future literary fame soon evaporate to give way to visions of despair. Utterly disillusioned, he tells his wife, "To make a trade of an art! I am rightly served for attempting such a brutal folly" (p. 81). Reardon is indeed unsuited to the pursuit of literature as a trade because of his innate artistic sensitivity. He is defeated by an inner conflict between his artistic pride and his artistic scorn. The success of his first novel "On Neutral Ground" gave him an inflated opinion of his literary talent (p. 37). As a result Reardon is unwilling to make a compromise in his artistic standards in order to write a potboiler. Schopenhauer writes from his own experience, "If you want to earn the gratitude of your own age you must keep in step with it ... If you have something great in view you must address yourself to posterity" (p. 131). Since Reardon is unwilling to make concessions to the modern markets he inevitably must perish, while the Jasper Milvains of his day prosper. Meanwhile the demise of Reardon's literary career also means the failure of his marriage, a state of affairs which shatters all his hopes. In the depths of despair he tells Milvain, "I might have known that such happiness was never meant for me" (p. 108).

Another downtrodden writer for whom "happiness was never meant" is Alfred Yule. From a young man embittered by numerous disputes with ruthless critics, Yule is frustrated further by his inability to succeed as a literary man of the old school. For "at the age of fifty he was still living in a poor house, in an obscure quarter" (p. 127). Truly, like Reardon, Yule is ill-equipped for the new competitive world of literature. In spite of his conscientiousness and erudition Yule is never destined to get the editorship he yearns for. When he has pinned his hopes on becoming editor of "The Study," for example, it turns out that he had never been seriously considered for the position (p. 135). The writing is on the wall, as Yule painfully realises, when the position goes to "a young man, comparatively fresh from the university" (p. 135). A broken man, regarding his daughter's hopes, he tells her self-compassionately, "If you marry, I wish you a happy life. The end of mine, of many long years of unremitting toil, is failure and destitution" (p. 460).

Unlike her father's, Marian's plight is of a special nature. An intellectual woman without means in late Victorian England, Marian is an odd woman of the type Gissing will represent in

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his later novel, *The Odd Women*. In the 1880s the only means of escape from incessant toil and the inexorable struggle for existence to such as Marian was either to become a governess or to marry. It is for this reason, while uncertain of her future as a writer, that Marian invests all her hopes in becoming Milvain's wife. Yet, like her father's before her, Marian's hopes are never to be realised. Indeed, owing to their plight this is the fate of almost all the downtrodden intellectuals in Gissing's modern Grub Street. Even Milvain's sister, Maud, who succeeds in

marrying a wealthy middle-class man, is soon disillusioned by marriage—a circumstance, by the way, reminiscent of Monica's marriage to Widdowson in *The Odd Women*.

According to Schopenhauer's philosophy, "the denial of the will to live" leads to deliverance from the vanity of existence. In *New Grub Street*, after great suffering and disillusionment Reardon and Biffen are eventually driven to contemplate the ultimate denial of their will to live. Reardon's will to die is particularly strong during his marriage crisis. At one point he asks himself, "If he killed himself ... would that be cowardly?" (p. 152). Sharing Schopenhauer's view of suicide, though, Reardon is convinced that to commit suicide would require more courage than to endure "poverty and wretchedness" (p. 152). But Reardon is basically weak, having neither the courage of his convictions, nor the mental resilience to overcome misfortune. Reminiscent of the pusillanimous Julian Casti in *The Unclassed*, but more thoroughly a martyr to his plight, Reardon does not kill himself. Instead he attempts to lose himself in artistic contemplation. For him, as he tells Biffen, "the best moments of life are those when we contemplate beauty in the purely artistic spirit" (p. 405). Thus no longer willing or able to bear the burden of responsibility, while perceiving the vanity of his hopes, Reardon resigns himself to his fate. Like Bernard Kingcote in *Isabel Clarendon*, his only "desire now is for peaceful obscurity" (p. 474). In social darwinistic terms, then, Reardon is a casualty of the modern literary battlefield.

Another Grub Street casualty, and far closer to exemplifying a Schopenhauerian world outlook, is Biffen. Like Reardon, Biffen wills to die because he has lost all his illusions, and recognised the vanity of his desires. Yet, unlike Reardon, Biffen has never known happiness. After all, as he tells himself, "why should he struggle to preserve a life which had no prospect but of misery?" (p. 527). What finally brings Biffen to the point of "longing for extinction" is the fact that he has become plagued with sexual desire (p. 527). In the grip of the sexual

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impulse he finds that he is incapable of retaining his detached view of life, which had previously enabled him to tolerate the hardships of his plight. "One must go far in suffering," the narrator concludes, "before the innate will-to-live is thus truly overcome" (p. 527). A hardened realist, it is by virtue of his pessimism that Biffen overcomes "the innate will-to-live." Like Schopenhauer, "convinced that this life is all," as he tells Reardon, Biffen can foresee that while tortured by sexual frustration he will never again be able to find consolation in artistic meditation (p. 477). Consequently, unlike Reardon, he has the courage of his convictions, because in the true Schopenhauerian spirit he joyfully wills to die: "His resolve was taken, not in a moment of supreme conflict, but as the result of a subtle process by which his imagination had become in love with death" (p. 528). After Biffen's death, ironically, it is the resourceful Grub Street survivor, Jasper Milvain, who describes the moral of Biffen's and Reardon's failure, and his success. He tells Marian, "It is men of my kind who succeed; the conscientious, and those who really have a high ideal, either perish or struggle on in neglect" (p. 539). In other words, in the modern literary arena, as the lives of the downtrodden writers in *New Grub Street* exemplify, the race is not to the weak, but to the swift and to the strong.

New Grub Street is a transitional novel in Gissing's depiction of downtrodden intellectuals. Whilst most fully expressing the pessimistic nature of Schopenhauer's philosophy in the views and actions of the prominent characters, it serves to prophesy in the character of Jasper Milvain the emergence of a new breed of impecunious intellectual in Gissing's work. In all of Gissing's fiction up to *New Grub Street* there is no character quite like Jasper Milvain. Indeed it needed a long literary apprenticeship and the cutting edge of his own cynicism about the modern literary world to make it possible for Gissing to create a character such as Milvain. In such future works as *Born in Exile* and *Our Friend the Charlatan*, Gissing will bring his conception of "the coming man" in the characters of Godwin Peak and Dyce Lashmar, respectively, to artistic

fulfilment.

In *New Grub Street*, meanwhile, as in the earlier *The Unclassed*, the more typical downtrodden intellectuals, because of their Schopenhauerian outlooks, tend to resign themselves philosophically to their unfortunate fates. They are passive and negative, and rarely respond combatively to the problems of life. Moreover, they seek solace from the miseries of their lonely and impoverished lives in detached meditation on the arts. In subsequent works like

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Born in Exile, *Denzil Quarrier*, and *Our Friend the Charlatan*, for instance, the typical intellectual is different in the one respect, but a most important one, that he chooses his own morality. He is less inclined to react passively to personal misfortune, or to accept the burden of misery, or even to see himself in bondage to fate. Finally, Gissing's new breed of downtrodden intellectual is not an aesthetic idealist, but a man of science.

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A Critical Enquiry into the Gissing Boom in Japan in the 1920s
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Inspired by Shigeru Koike's enlightening article, "Gissing in Japan" (1970),¹ I resolved to make further research on how Gissing has been introduced into Japan from the early twentieth century until the present day.

According to Professor Koike, it was Tokuboku Hirata who in 1908 took the decisive step. Referring to Hirata's essay about Gissing published the next year, he speculates that Hirata had

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read *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, *New Grub Street*, *By the Ionian Sea* and *Veranilda*. Judging from another essay about Gissing which Hirata wrote for a volume entitled *A Study of*

Contemporary English Literature (1912), he might also have read *The Town Traveller*.² Known as a pioneer in the study of English literature in his country, Hirata read a great many English writers from the beginnings to his own day, and it is surprising that he read so many works by Gissing, considering that his reputation at the time was less prominent than that of many other writers.

However that may be, soon after Hirata introduced him into Japan, Gissing began to gain popularity and never before or after was he more widely read than in the 1920s. A number of translations of his works, especially those of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* and *The House of Cobwebs*, became available. In 1923, two complete translations of *Henry Ryecroft* were published by Kojo Kurihara and Shigeru Fujino, and a partial one by Yuhichi Yamada in 1927-1928. As for *The House of Cobwebs*, a partial translation of it by Yoshinohu Kamitsukasa appeared in 1927 and a complete one in 1930 by Rikichi Sato, who also wrote an essay, "Gissing's View of Women" (1925).³ And Kamitsukasa's words in the preface to his translation clearly reflect Gissing's popularity in the 1920s:

Among Gissing's short stories, those collected in *The House of Cobwebs* are known to be his best. The seven stories selected for this book are all taken from it. English textbooks used in high schools and technical schools also include a few stories from it. Although there have been as well some editions with translations and notes, the errors in them are so numerous as to be a hindrance to the students' correct understanding of the text. Once aware of this regrettable situation, I resolved to bring out as correct a translation as possible and to help the students to study it.⁴

Other evidence of the Gissing boom in the same decade can be found in the November 1924 number of *Eigo Kenkyu* which was subtitled *Special George Gissing Number*. This monthly magazine, whose English title was *The Study of English*, was one of the two leading periodicals devoted to studies of English language and literature in Japan. It was discontinued in 1976 and absorbed into *Eigo Seinen (The Rising Generation)*, the other magazine, which is still running to-day.

In this particular issue appeared three translations of Gissing's works and three articles. The three translations were a partial one of *New Grub Street* by Mirai Sugita, extracts from *Henry Ryecroft* by Taro Miura and "Raw Material" in full by Masatsugu Kubota. To the best of

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my knowledge, Kubota's is the only translation of this short story that has ever been published. As for the three articles, they were "For Research on George Robert Gissing" by Miura, "The World of Henry Ryecroft" by Sugita, and "A View of George Gissing" by Rintaro Fukuhara, a young critic of thirty-two, who would later become a distinguished scholar of English literature and an excellent essayist.⁵ Miura's article was an introduction to works by and on Gissing. Sugita's was a very harsh and unfavourable comment on *Henry Ryecroft*, but one with which I sympathize in part. Fukuhara's article dealt largely with *Henry Ryecroft*, too, and in it we can see his budding talent as a scholar and essayist of deep insight.

As Fukuhara's article reveals a view of Gissing's works which, I feel, is still valid to-day, and many readers of the *Gissing Journal* may agree with, let me give a translation of it:

"A View of George Gissing" (1924) by Rintaro Fukuhara

The great popularity of George Gissing in present-day Japan is a phenomenon worth examining closely. Since he is not thought to be such a

great writer in the English literary world, there must be some reason why, in Japan, he has gained far greater popularity than many writers of his time. Of course, there are writers who have gained more fame and are read more widely. For example, Thomas Hardy and H. G. Wells have more Japanese readers. But such contemporaries of Gissing as Bernard Shaw, J. M. Barrie and John Galsworthy are not so widely read that their words and phrases are remembered by students working for university entrance examinations. Nor are Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, George Moore, Arnold Bennett or G. K. Chesterton.

It must be realized, however, that Gissing has earned fame in Japan chiefly through the presence of his works in high school textbooks. There is hardly any other writer in modern English literature, except R. L. Stevenson, who has been read in Japanese schools. Certainly Stevenson still seems to be read widely today, but those who have achieved the greatest fame of late are Gissing and Hardy. And, strangely enough, Hardy is not accepted as a poet, though he had a high opinion of his achievements in verse, but as a writer of short stories represented by *Life's Little Ironies* and *Wessex Tales*. As for Gissing, his popularity in Japan also seems to rest partly on his short stories, such as those collected in *The House of Cobwebs*, but largely on a volume of essays, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. School textbooks draw from these two volumes and Gissing is famous for his capacity both as story-writer and essayist. For their pure taste of English literature, other writers may have been read more widely.

I can think of several reasons for the popularity of Gissing in textbooks.

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First, because he is a prose writer and, moreover, as the texts selected from his works are short, they are very convenient, each chapter or essay in *Henry Ryecroft* especially so. This practical reason seems to account for the popularity of certain English writers, besides Gissing, in Japanese schools. For example, until recent years, of all Charles Dickens's works, *A Christmas Carol* and *The Cricket on the Hearth* have been read most widely. The reason is that they are short. It seems that the same phenomenon can be witnessed, not only in Japan, but in Western countries. In England many of these works are set books for certain types of qualification tests. However, Dickens wrote these tales only for amusement and the real value of the writer lies in such grand works as *David Copperfield*. We must not be misguided by this practical motive and forget that Hardy wrote such a long novel as *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and that Gissing also wrote many excellent long novels, *New Grub Street* for instance. Yet, of course, there is no doubt that *Henry Ryecroft* is Gissing's great masterpiece and he might be delighted at being accepted so widely nowadays in Japan.

The second reason for the popularity of this work is that Gissing wrote standard English: his texts contain few jokes, amusing expressions, technical terms or slang. Contrastingly, Conrad indulged in such an abundance of maritime terminology and Madras slang that he is far from suitable for school textbooks and even difficult for Japanese scholars of English language and literature. Indian place names and Indian English flow ceaselessly from Kipling's pen. Cockney often appears in Barrie, and Chesterton's works are filled with eccentric phraseology. When Gissing is

compared with these writers, his English strikes one as more sophisticated and of better quality. It is suitable for a textbook and easy to read even for amateurs. This is another reason why Gissing is so popular in Japan.

The third reason for the popularity of *Henry Ryecroft* lies in its contents. The contents of a book are the important factor in deciding whether it is suitable for a textbook. Japanese students of English grew tired of the contents of *Self-Help*, *Pushing to the Front*, *The Intellectual Life* and *The Use of Life*.⁶ They became weary of the platitude of the scholastic morals expressed in these books and called for something more refreshing. Then we came across Gissing. For textbooks of English literature at the elementary level, we have come to need work partly fictional, partly autobiographical. And both teachers and students wanted interesting work, expressive of modern thinking and related to our life. *Henry Ryecroft* could satisfy the need. Certainly Wells's short stories are good, but they are a bit too much like detective fiction. We can sympathize with Shaw and Galsworthy in their thinking, but it is a pity that their works are too "dramatic." Bennett, a light fiction writer, and George Moore, a naturalist, produced few short stories, and few of their works have been made known to Japanese readers. The literary world in Japan is still under the influence of Ibsen, which is why, I

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suspect, Gissing's short stories, which deal with similar social problems, are accepted by both teachers and students learning foreign literature. Gissing's short stories give very realistic descriptions of old and new thinking, of mental attitudes of father and child, and of strife between master and servant. On the other hand, *Henry Ryecroft* presents problems which a man in the twilight of his life meditated upon calmly after going through misery, doubt and solitude at the end of the last century. It is not without reason that Gissing is welcomed to-day.

The latter consideration accounts for the fact that Gissing's popularity in Japan largely depends upon school textbooks; his works are very adequately suited to them. Although their contents are a little dated from the viewpoint of to-day's new literature and *Henry Ryecroft* is rather egoistic and too theoretical in parts, they are not vulgar like those of Conan Doyle or Van Dyke, and still newer. I suspect that this is why teachers prefer to teach Gissing in their classes. However, what is suitable for a school textbook is not necessarily good literary work. In the eye of a cultural pioneer, school is a place which is far behind the times. It is to be admired that the "School English" has discovered Gissing, but it should not be content with him.

Although there might be something to say about his view of other writers, I agree with Fukuhara's view of Gissing. Certainly *Henry Ryecroft* is Gissing's masterpiece, but he wrote many excellent novels and short stories which are as interesting as this volume of recollections and reflections. Therefore readers should not be content with *Henry Ryecroft* only. It is wrong to assume that this book represents the only good work that Gissing can offer.

According to Shigeru Koike, the boom of *Henry Ryecroft* met with a check in 1928 because the book was banned from Japanese schools by order of the Ministry of Education on account of the author's abhorrence of war apparent in "Spring XIX." However, it seems to have recovered its "citizenship" and regained its popularity soon after World War II, for a number of educated Japanese now in their fifties and sixties tell me that Gissing always reminds them of

Henry Ryecroft because they enjoyed reading it in their school days. And, whenever they tell me so, I point out to them that Gissing is not only the author of *Henry Ryecroft* but also of many interesting novels and short stories.

I guess that not a few readers of the *Gissing Journal* share Fukuhara's view and mine. I remember my discussion about Gissing with Clifford Brook in his spacious Wakefield house in 1990. He and I agreed that Gissing's other novels were no less interesting than *Henry Ryecroft*. (I still cannot believe that sweet old gentleman has gone out of this world!)

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As I said earlier, another critical view of *Henry Ryecroft* by Sugita appeared in the same number of *The Study of English*.⁷ He was, however, much more bitter than Fukuhara. Sugita wrote his article as a message to young readers. While Fukuhara admitted that the book was Gissing's masterpiece, Sugita denounced it as having harmful effects upon the young and went so far as saying that the Japanese youth of his time must never read it, as it was written by an old man defeated in the battle of life. He warned them that, since the young "live in the future," they must never be, like Ryecroft, onlookers of life who "live in the past." And he expressed his wish that the Japanese youth living at the turning-point of history, where a new social order was being formed, should not be misled by this defeated old man.

I read Gissing for the first time in Professor Koike's class at my university. He taught us *The Paying Guest* and *The Odd Women*. They impressed me so much that I made up my mind to become a scholar of English literature and specialize in Gissing in the future. As I learned that *Henry Ryecroft* was Gissing's masterpiece, I decided to read it out of a sense of obligation, but reading it through was really a painful task as I found it very boring. I guess the reason why, at that time, I could not feel much interest in the book was that I still "lived in the future," to use Sugita's words, and could not sympathize with or even understand what Ryecroft, who "lived in the past," tried to tell us. Therefore, looking back on my own experience now, I sympathize, in a sense, with Sugita's implication that *Henry Ryecroft* does not fit young readers.

Nevertheless, when I read the two articles, I was more attracted by Fukuhara's insight into Gissing's works and felt interest in Fukuhara himself. That is why I decided to read his later essays and re-read *Henry Ryecroft*. Then, to my surprise, I noticed a great many similarities between them. Fukuhara led a secluded life in a hermitage in the suburbs of Tokyo after retiring from his post as a university professor. Like Ryecroft he had heart disease when he began to live in seclusion. He published a book, *An Account of My Seclusion in Nokata* (1964) which, like *Henry Ryecroft*, combined retrospective descriptions of his past life with social criticism and analysed his secluded life in his then still rural suburb. Ryecroft's and Fukuhara's strongest social criticism was aimed at their respective countries' materialistic and vulgar developments. Another interesting similarity between them was an attachment to plants and flowers that they began to feel as they grew older. Both men had little interest in them and hardly knew their names when young. As a literary critic and essayist, Fukuhara's main interest had been man

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rather than nature. I imagine that the same was true of Ryecroft, or Gissing, who had been describing an amazing variety of men in his novels.

What attracted me in Fukuhara's essays and *Henry Ryecroft* was the truths of life which they revealed through their own varied experiences. And the one which attracted me most was the importance of being earnest. Relating his encounters with a multiplicity of people, Fukuhara wrote:

Each man has a life of his own. He need only do steadily, earnestly and

kindly what he can do in his own life. What another person can do is only what he can do. What I can do is only what I can do. A man need not be jealous of his fellow-creatures. Such is my opinion, though I cannot tell since when it has been.⁸

There is another episode in the book which shows Fukuhara's earnestness vividly.⁹ During World War II, he was determined never to leave Tokyo because he held a regular seminar on English literature every Friday. Even when there was an air raid, he went on with it, with a helmet within reach. Two days after he heard the news of Japan's defeat in the War, he was reading Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* with the other members of his Friday seminar, and on that occasion he did not condemn the War itself as Ryecroft would have done, but the dishonest attitudes towards it of certain Japanese academics, and he voiced his disgust with them. Those academics had taken refuge in the country during the War and they returned to Tokyo once it was over. Although they had taken sides with Japan's militarism during the War, they now regarded Japan's defeat as fully deserved and spoke loudly of Japan's silliness.

Contrastingly, Ryecroft was proud of his life because he had kept doing earnestly what he could do, overcoming misery and poverty, and eventually reaching peaceful contentment:

Now, my life is rounded; it began with the natural irreflective happiness of childhood, it will close in the reasoned tranquillity of the mature mind. How many a time, after long labour on some piece of writing, brought at length to its conclusion, have I laid down the pen with a sigh of thankfulness; the work was full of faults, but I had wrought sincerely, had done what time and circumstance and my own nature permitted.¹⁰

I am sure that Fukuhara's essays and *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* are worth re-reading and will stand the test of time.

All the translations of quotations from books and articles in Japanese are mine.

¹Shigeru Koike, Giichi Kamo, C. C. Kohler and Pierre Coustillas, *Gissing East and West: Four Aspects* (London: Enitharmon Press, 1970), pp. 1-10.

²"George Gissing," *Selected Works of Tokuboku Hirata* (1981; rpt, Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1982), pp. 472-74.

³*The Study of English*, Vol. 10, no. 3 (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1925), pp. 227-29, 248.

⁴"Preface by the Translator," *A Charming Family and Six Other Stories* (Tokyo: Taibunsha).

⁵Rintaro Fukuhara (1895-1981). As a scholar of English literature, his main concerns were Samuel Johnson, Thomas Gray and Charles Lamb. *The Writings of Rintaro Fukuhara*, 12 Volumes, were published by Kenkyusha in 1968-1969. "A View of George Gissing" appeared in *The Study of English*, pp. 998-99.

⁶Respectively works by the popular Victorian moralist Samuel Smiles (1859), the American journalist and magazine editor Orison Swett Marden (1894), Philip Gilbert Hamerton (1873), painter and art critic, and Sir John Lubbock (1894), later Baron Avebury.

⁷"The World of Henry Ryecroft" appeared on pp. 1002-05.

⁸"To Live in this World," *The Writings of Rintaro Fukuhara*, Vol. 6, pp. 250-51.

⁹"A Cat," *Ibid.*, pp. 298-302.

¹⁰*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903; rpt, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982), p. 292.

Greek Culture and Gissing's Journey to Greece

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George Gissing had a very intimate relationship with Greek culture. At the sensitive period of youth, he sought many ideas and ideals in classical studies, and this devotion to the classics lasted all his life.

During his stay in Athens in late 1889, he always carried his favourite classics with him, and spent much time studying them. He obviously did so primarily in order to enhance his understanding and appreciation of these literary works and ancient Greek civilisation. Thus, he says in his diary, "I worked at Aristophanes." He also remarks, "I find it difficult to read in open air. Do so, however, carrying my Aristophanes about." We also find other comments such as "In morning finished the 'Symposium,'" "Did nothing much except read Sophocles," "Have read Lucian's 'Dream' and 'Charon,' and half finished the 'Timon.'"

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Why did Gissing find ancient Greece and its spiritual ideals so enchanting? Pierre Coustillas has rightly observed that Gissing found in ancient Greece "an exalted ideal," and my view is that it also was in harmony with his own qualities and character. In *By the Ionian Sea*, Gissing says that his intellectual desire was to escape life as he knew it and dream himself into that old world, and that the names of Greece and Italy drew him as no others did, and made him young again. As Francesco Badolato, the Italian scholar observes, it "provided him with a kind of refuge from the grim realities of the modern industrial and commercial world."

It is well known that a journey to Athens had long been one of Gissing's dreams; indeed, with the passing of time he came to feel ever more strongly that he must undertake it. It may also be said that he realised that his perception of the ancient world would remain imperfect if he did not experience personally the physical reality of Athens, and walk on the same soil, be under the same sun; in short, to feel in some measure the impact of the physical environment in which the Ancient Athenians had been raised. Therefore, although still somewhat handicapped by poverty, he managed to achieve his dream in the autumn of 1889, leaving London on 11 November, travelling through France by train to Marseilles, sailing from there to Piræus, and reaching Athens on 19 November.

Greek culture, as portrayed in Gissing's diary, has two very different aspects. The diary shows him as deeply interested in the relics of the past, such as the temples, the statues, and the famous historical places. He was also interested in the present realities of Greek life, as manifested in the scenes of everyday life that he observed. In the descriptions and reflections contained in the diary, Gissing often moves between the Greek past and the Greek present, but he wrote about them as if they were two quite different worlds.

Relics of the past, though they may often be in pieces, are still illuminating, but much of what Gissing observed in modern Athens indicated cultural deterioration. His attention was mainly captured by the monuments of the past, and especially those of the Acropolis. For him they were creations of ideal beauty, and recognised to be unsurpassed human achievements. His first visit to that famous rock was one of the most moving experiences of his life, for he wrote: "In truth I have trodden this sacred soil!" These words seem to suggest how keenly he had wanted to visit the place, as well as implying the long delay and frustration before he was able to travel there.

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It is evident that Gissing was fascinated by the Acropolis, because he visited it several times, and examined its features both from nearby and from further away, and made sketches of it from all sides. Thus, in his diary entry for 21 November, he noted, "Made sketches of the Acropolis and of Lycabettos, from Kolonos," and in that of 9 December, he made a sketch of the Acropolis and the Athenian hills, from the foot of Munychia.

Two features of the Athenian environment must have struck Gissing as having been significant in the development of its culture: the soil and the light. The former is described as "barren" (diary, 19 and 20 November), whereas the latter is full of splendour. Gissing says (diary, 21 November), "I soon came to the Kephisos, or rather to its bed, for there is absolutely not a drop of water...of course not a blade of grass growing," and (diary, 24 November), "As I stood just inside the Acropolis, the Erechteion gleamed against that cloud-background, its yellow marble wonderfully illumined, every stone distinct, its outlines seeming cut out."

Gissing was very struck by the "sterility" or "barrenness" of the soil. Nevertheless, the ancient Greeks living in the intense natural light characteristic of Athens, found the inspiration to produce valuable works of art. When this light illuminates the "sacred" rock of the Acropolis, it ceases to be merely a natural phenomenon, and provides a supernatural source of inspiration. It also inspired Gissing, who, in *New Grub Street*, has Edwin Reardon tell Biffen of that marvellous sunset over Athens. In a letter to his family, too, Gissing speaks of the glorious ruins of the Acropolis, observing, "Impossible for any painter to render such scenes."

In contrast to the brilliant natural light, the physical remains of ancient Greek culture formed part of the dark side of Greece that Gissing noticed. He writes in his diary: "Looked carefully at the masses of fallen marble, distributed all about the open spaces – a vast mournful wreck." Almost equally painful for Gissing must have been the apparent indifference of the State to public welfare. He refers to the extremely filthy condition of the streets, the "heaps of slush and garbage" dumped on the outskirts of Athens, and the unrepaired bridge on the main road (diary, 3 December). Such a State would be unable to protect and preserve the ancient monuments.

Gissing claimed to discern signs of cultural decay in the appearance of ordinary people, as well as in the political repression and in the obvious evidence of social inequality. Thus, Gissing noticed some soldiers in the Main Post Office, and was struck by their puny physique ("low

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stature, thin, badly shaped; their faces small, bony, ignoble... yet good-natured") and hungry appearance. They were anything but imposing, and must have seemed to Gissing very far from the ideal beauty of ancient athletes, and incapable of contributing to any kind of cultural reform.

Indeed Gissing's overall reaction to modern Greece and modern Greeks seems to have been unfavourable. In his diary entry for 1 December, he comments: "Decidedly, I don't like the Greek people, so far as I see them. Utterly alien from my sympathies. Very different from my feeling towards the Italians." Gissing's ideas about cultural progress are expressed in his early novels about the life of the poor and in the novels written after 1889. He learned early in life that the things he valued could not flourish in poor material circumstances. Economic poverty could only lead to the vulgarisation of politics, art and literature.

The political system was equally unattractive to Gissing, as it had nothing in common with Periclean democracy. It was rather authoritarian and much power was exercised by the kings (who were of German origin) and who repressed the liberty of the people. Gissing despised their role, called them "vulgar" and stressed the contrast between the king and the miserable people, represented in an incident that he records (diary, 29 November) by a wretched crippled priest standing helplessly as the royal carriage drove past.

The social inequalities that Gissing noticed affected in particular women and children,

regardless of their social class. Greek women suffered from male oppression, and they were not allowed to move freely about the streets by themselves. Poor women were especially miserable: economic necessity forced them to do some of the heavier jobs, such as breaking stones for use in the construction of roads. Gissing's phrase about such women, "poor creatures," expresses his sympathy for them, but he also regarded these uneducated women as a source of misery to their husbands and families, and to society at large.

With regard to art, Gissing noticed the lack of creativity and elegance, though he does refer to some authentic Greek characteristics that had survived through the ages, such as the Greek language (he was rather surprised to find that the written language, in the newspapers, resembled so closely the ancient Greek tongue with which he was familiar), and some special customs relating to hospitality; he notes, "the Greeks would not allow me to pay my share of the carriage—rather wonderful in Greeks, I thought."

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It is important to mention a few historical facts in order to cast light on some of Gissing's comments. Until 1881, large areas of the present Greek State were still under Turkish occupation, and various great European powers (notably Russia, France and Great Britain) exerted considerable control over the Greek economy. The national budgets were insufficient for supporting cultural programmes, as about 50 % of them were devoted to repaying national debts, and about 30 % to defence. In short, the Greek people suffered from great poverty.

Despite serious disadvantages, Greeks with "ugly faces" had been struggling to overcome the various political and economic difficulties confronting the relatively new Greek State. Gissing might have been more hopeful about the future of Greece if he had known that in 1844 the Greeks had succeeded in voting in a progressive constitution, and that they had got rid of the Bavarian King Otto in 1862, and if he had known about the fairly long periods in power of a fine politician, Charilaos Trikoupes, whose policies were, in general, beneficial to Greece. At the time of Gissing's visit, a road network was being constructed, and the railway system was being extended. These measures facilitated trade, and were influential in the development of a new social class, consisting of such groups as factory owners, bankers, and naval officers. Indeed, Gissing himself refers to two of the technical achievements of that time, the new railway to Larissa and the opening of the Corinthian Canal. He would also have been happy if he had realised that the working classes were forming trade unions to obtain their rights. Last but not least, there was a developing literary movement, in both prose and poetry. Its adherents rejected romanticism, and some of them sought a better ordering of society, as well as advocating democratic principles and promoting national consciousness.

Gissing's journey to Athens, then, was undertaken primarily because of his passionate interest in ancient Greek culture. But since he was a man of wide interests and sympathies, he saw other things than the remains of ancient Greek civilisation. And it is clear that, on the whole, he was not very favourably impressed by modern Greece and its inhabitants. However, his comments on these modern themes were the result of reading newspapers and, especially, observing the Athenian social scene with a sharp eye; he did not undertake any study of modern Greek history or of economic and political life; and what he says about modern Greece is interesting but somewhat shallow, because of his firm devotion to the classical world. Furthermore, a contrast between ancient glory and modern degeneration is not made explicitly

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by Gissing, but it is one of the things that strikes any careful reader of his diary.

I am grateful to Russell Price for his helpful comments on an earlier draft version and

especially for the final paragraph, which is based on his ideas.

* * *

Gissing and St. Sidwell

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Eastbourne

Towards the end of the first millennium the Anglo-Saxons had achieved control over the greater part of Southern England. Rapid conversion to Christianity was achieved by a somewhat tolerant attitude to pagan traditions and the absorption of their beliefs. Local goddesses tended to be replaced by local saints. Hence, the many obscure saints in the West Country. In 932 the Anglo-Saxon King Athelstan presented to the monastery (later cathedral) church of St. Mary and St. Peter at Exeter many holy relics including some on which the label read: "From the gentle virgin St. Sidwell who, guiltless, was slain by her father's mower; and afterwards Almighty God displayed many miracles at her tomb."¹

Sidwell's well-to-do family appear to have settled in Exeter in the eighth century. They owned estates to the east of the city which were worked by their serfs. Bishop John Grandisson writing in the fourteenth century declares that nature and grace so worked together in her that they conferred on her a title of praise for beauty of form and moral integrity.

Sidwell lived a tranquil life in spite of the turbulent times. Alas, there were troubles ahead. Her mother died and her new step-mother, consumed with jealousy of her step-daughter's holy image, plotted her downfall. It was Sidwell's practice to take food to the serfs working in the fields beyond the city gates. On one sunny August day she approached her task with a sense of foreboding but performed her duties with fortitude and prayer. The serfs, seduced by promises of reward, set about her with their scythes. Legend has it that proof of her virginal innocence came with the formation of a spring of water at her feet and a radiant light about her dismembered body. Thus, Sidwell achieved her holy status by submissive example rather than militant defence of the faith.



St. Sidwell (Courtesy of Tesco Stores Ltd)

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Virgin Saints with their severed heads, sometimes carried and sometimes reinstated, were venerated throughout Devon and the West Country. They included Juthware, Sidwell's own sister at Sherborne, a victim of the same step-mother who met her fate by her brother's sword. Holy wells, screens, stained glass windows and sculptured panels were dedicated to their memory. Sadly, St. Sidwell's church in Exeter, which contained many such panels, was destroyed in an air raid in 1942, but her image can still be found in the great East Window in the Cathedral. Further afield she graces a window in the chapel of All Souls College in Oxford. There was also a wall painting at Eton College which was badly damaged by the erection of an organ screen in the eighteenth century but, fortunately, drawings were made of it before the damage was done. Two churches dedicated to the saint are to be found in Exeter in Sidwell Street. One the rebuilt Anglican, the other belongs to the Methodist denomination. The Sidwell legend in Exeter has been kept alive in a most unexpected quarter. Above the Tesco Supermarket, also in Sidwell Street, she is represented in a bas-relief designed for Tesco by Frederick Irving of Bideford in 1969. She stands holding a scythe, a spring bubbling at her feet, the town gate in the background. An elegant figure serene and calm above the commercialism below.

A thousand years later in 1891 Gissing came to live in Exeter with his new wife, Edith, and plans for a new book, *Born in Exile*. The Christian Church was still militant. The struggle it had in the early days to replace paganism now became a struggle to avoid its own replacement by the gospel according to Charles Darwin. The Devon and Exeter Institution Library still contains a large collection of books reflecting the fierce debates on questions of orthodox belief and scientific knowledge. The subject was to become one of the two main themes in *Born in Exile*. The other theme concerned Gissing's quest for a perfect mate, somewhere between an

emancipated woman and a “daughter of the people.” He was already aware that Edith came from the latter group. The two themes became intertwined in the book with complicated and ultimately disastrous results.

The writer has failed to find any evidence that Gissing investigated the legend of St. Sidwell before choosing the name for his principal female character in *Born in Exile*. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that many of the characteristics attributed to the Saint are replicated in Sidwell Warricombe. Both are from prosperous, middle-class families. Both have charm and beauty. Both are intelligent without wishing to set the world on fire. Both seem

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prepared to accept their fate calmly without noisy protest. In the world of books and legends both would appear to comply with Gissing’s eligibility criterion and qualify to be an acceptable Sidwell Gissing.

¹M. Foerster, ed., *Zur Geschichte des Reliquienkultus in Altengland*, Munich, 1943, p. 80; translated by M. Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, London, 1975, p. 19.

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Book Reviews

George Gissing, *The Odd Women*, edited by Arlene Young. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview (Literary Texts), 1998.

Broadview, a Canadian publisher, is an enterprising newcomer whose list of edited and annotated classic novels is rapidly expanding. Doubtless the press’s intention is to give the venerable Norton Critical Editions a run for their money. Their texts supply not only an introduction and textual notes pitched at the undergraduate level, but also a selection of secondary material (reviews, social history, criticism, etc) in a well-bound package with attractive typography on good paper, and all at a competitive price.

Broadview’s enterprise is especially welcome in the case of *The Odd Women*, Gissing’s second most commonly studied novel. It is curious, given its value to social historians as well as to literature, there has never been a properly edited edition of this masterpiece. The Anthony Blond edition of 1968, with a brief introduction by Frank Swinnerton and no notes, had many misprints. The Virago edition (1980), with a much longer introduction by Margaret Walters, used the Blond text and had the same pagination, although at least the more obvious misprints were corrected – rather clumsily, in some cases. The New American Library edition had a lengthy introduction by Elaine Showalter which is perceptive and informed but unfortunately has a few factual errors. The current Penguin edition is the same as the NAL edition, and has done nothing to correct the errors in the introduction or to modernise the woefully outdated bibliography.

This new text is much better in all respects than any of its predecessors, and deserves to become the text of choice for teachers – especially given its modest price. Young’s introduction is accurate and knowledgeable; her notes fairly comprehensive and succinct; her appendices of

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supplementary material well-chosen; and her bibliography includes items published as recently as 1995. It was a good idea, for such a geographically conscious novel, to include a map of Victorian London, although it is poorly reproduced and too small in scale – nothing like as

useful as John Goode's map and explanatory essay in the World's Classics *New Grub Street*. Young's base text is the first edition, the only one to appear in Gissing's lifetime, to which she says she has made "occasional minor alterations to correct obvious typographical errors or to eliminate awkwardly archaic spellings." The text seems generally accurate, but some misprints have unfortunately been introduced: I noticed "labouriously," p. 53; "No doubt she was weighed advantages," p. 138; "to take you word," p. 281; "Whenever he sister," p. 301, none of which is present in the first edition.

Young leads off provocatively in her introduction by defining *The Odd Women* as "arguably the most important novel published in Britain in the 1890s." Before she is eaten alive by Thomas Hardy's devotees, she goes on to sharpen and restrict her definition of "important": not the most accomplished, nor the most profound, but the one most "fundamentally attuned to late Victorian culture and to the social issues defining that culture." Perhaps Young overstates her case even so; but there is no doubt that with a novel of such documentary realism and specificity of detail the question of the textual notes – their quality and extent – looms especially large.

It is always a difficult and sensitive matter to know what needs annotating, especially when the text will be used by undergraduates who live both in and out of Britain. The notes have to avoid triteness while giving diplomatic support to students who have a hazy knowledge of English life as it is now, let alone how it was a century ago. Thus, for instance, Young is surely right to gloss the exact meaning of "tea" in the Victorian middle-class context. On the other hand, one might question whether any reader who is likely to pick up this novel, or even one who has to read it as a set text, needs to be told that hock is a German white wine or that a hansom was a cab; that a sovereign was a coin or that the Strand is a London street. Young also adopts the unusual strategy of repeating her notes, presumably in case the reader has forgotten her earlier definition: the notes to "tea" and to "bait" are both reprinted identically at different points in the text.

There are two casual allusions in *The Odd Women* which have always intrigued me, and I was disappointed to see that Young lets me down for both. One is the mathematician Micklethwaite's casual reference to "the relativity of time and space" as being a concept that his

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new wife "might hope to master." Is it really as striking as it seems that Gissing could put that phrase in his mouth in 1893, twelve years before Einstein's paper on special relativity? A note would certainly have helped here. Second, I've never understood Mary Barfoot's comment to Rhoda, apropos Everard's plan to cane his sister-in-law, that "we know the story of the lady and the glove." Do we? Probably not, in fact; and Young does not enlighten us. The reference is either to a poem by Leigh Hunt or one by Browning – more probably the latter, though both are very obscure.

More generally, it is a pity that Young's notes are so closely restricted to factual matters. I know from experience that Gissing's irony can bewilder young students, and sometimes it is unfortunate that she does not take the opportunity to spell out Gissing's precise implications. She might, for instance, have clarified the new occupation of Miss Eade, Monica's old rival at the shop, whom Monica runs into at Victoria station. She is described as waiting for her "brother's" train, and also in "casual colloquy" with "men who also stood waiting – perchance for their sisters": at this point a nudge to the naive reader about the role of railway stations in nineteenth-century sexual commerce might have been useful. Another is the ironical narrative aside that Monica's shop, Messrs Scotcher, "had no objection whatever to their young friends taking a stroll after closing-time each evening.... The air of Walworth Road is pure and invigorating about midnight." The implication that they implicitly permit this to allow their employees to supplement their meagre wages by prostitution is lost on most students – who

naturally don't know where the shop is located, because Gissing doesn't say at this point: it really could be in the airy outer suburbs for all they know to the contrary.

The secondary material is well-chosen. There are six contemporary reviews, and seven extracts on women and marriage (Tennyson, Patmore, Ruskin, Mill etc) – the sources are the obvious ones, but none the worse for that, and ingeniously abridged, particularly in the case of Ruskin's notoriously rambling "Of Queens' Gardens." There are six extracts on the New Woman issue and two further sets of extracts on clerking employment and shop assistants' working conditions: the choice of the vivid autobiographical passages from that ex-drapeer's assistant H. G. Wells being especially welcome.

There is little in any of the apparatus to reveal its Canadian origins. A small quibble is that readers in other countries, certainly in Britain or Australia, might be slightly confused by the editor's probably unintentional conflation, in the extracts and notes to them, of the terms "clerk"

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(or "salesclerk") and "shop assistant." Outside North America a "clerk" is always and only an office worker (usually of humble status), and never one who stands behind a counter.

Peter Morton, The Flinders University of South Australia

I am grateful to Margot Louis and other contributors to the VICTORIA Internet forum for help in preparing this review.

John Hughes, *Lines of Flight: Reading Deleuze with Hardy, Gissing, Conrad, Woolf* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Barbara Leah Harman, *The Feminine Political Novel in Victorian England* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998); George Gissing, *Oi Kondylophoroi* (Athens: Exantas, 1995); Philip R. Bishop, *Thomas Bird Mosher, Pirate Prince of Publishers* (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, and London: The British Library).

The title of John Hughes's book, perhaps his first, is explicit. *Lines of Flight: Reading Deleuze with Hardy, Gissing, Conrad, Woolf* is one of those many studies, published since the 1970s, which have consisted in revaluations of major writers in the light of this or that theory of literature. Usually theoreticians are French. We are all familiar with the names of Barthes, Derrida, Baudrillard, Lacan, etc, and long before them we had Bachelard and Bergson. The abundant critical literature which has been produced under such influences has become a speciality of some French, English and American publishers, whose policy it has largely been to reject manuscripts that ignored all those master minds. The will to be modern has in some quarters become as strong if not as oppressive as the will to live, and there was a time, in the late 1960s and 1970s, when if a novelist – Gissing being a significant example – could not be demonstrated to be a Marxist *avant la lettre*, chronology preventing him or her from being a certified Marxist, he or she was regarded as politically incorrect and a producer of necessarily inferior artistic work. Fortunately, now that far fewer critics swear by ideologies, that kind of mental attitude tends to become uncommon, and the present book by John Hughes assuredly does not fall into the category of critical studies that put off the average cultured readers. Still it is when he temporarily forgets about Deleuze and his more readable ancestor Bergson, that he is at his best and most convincing.

It can safely be predicted that future commentators, if they have a chance of reading Hughes's chapter on *The Odd Women*, the only Gissing book he discusses, will not find it

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possible to dismiss his assessment of what Arlene Young, in her recent critical edition, calls “arguably the most important novel published in Britain in the 1890s.” The argument of his chapter, he writes, “is that it is not in its naturalism conceived as social documentation and polemic that Gissing’s true and radical originality lies in *The Odd Women*, but in the text’s delineation and expression of negative emotion. The discussion turns accordingly on noting, on the one hand, the scrupulous lucidity of Gissing’s analyses of such states of feeling (and their causes and workings), while also noting, on the other hand, the diverse ways in which the text is itself gripped in its forms of expression by similarly powerful and solitary antipathies.” Whereupon the critic reminds us of Alice B. Markow’s preliminary stocktaking in her article “George Gissing: Advocate or Provocateur of the Women’s Movement?” (*English Literature in Transition*, vol. 2 (1985), no. 2): “Most Gissing critics have observed the author’s ambivalence and inconsistency regarding women. A few critics, such as Patricia Stubbs, Lloyd Fernando, Elaine Showalter and John Goode tend to regard Gissing as more or less supporting the ideal of the traditional woman, at least in his later work. Still, most critics – Jacob Korg, Paul Sporn, Irving Howe, Carol Munn, Alison Cotes, Jean Kennard, Robert Selig, and Katherine Linehan, to name a few – do view Gissing as essentially feminist.” Hughes innovates in choosing a third way. To him Gissing’s main merit and specific approach to the so called Woman Question, have little enough to do with his analysis of the female mind and of the social status of women at the turn of the century. They lie in his view of the human predicament as represented through the characters, not only female, but also male, enmeshed in the paradigmatic conflicts depicted in the story. Hughes, following Fredric Jameson in this, makes much of the notion of *ressentiment*, a French word which they invest with a glorified meaning that no French dictionary would sanction. He argues that “*ressentiment* appears an inner mainspring for the narrative own powers of analysis and feeling. In terms of the narrative attitude, sympathy, or at least an accentuated sense of the pitiable, is inseparable from an unfeeling, poised attitude which takes a kind of intellectual satisfaction in registering and demonstrating implacably, as if by a syllogism, the truth of a character’s fate and misfortune. Gissing’s text is animated by this complex double-sidedness, a characteristic combination of boundless pathos and merciless irony.” This is illustrated by the narrator’s treatment of Alice and Virginia in a tone foreshadowed by the short evocation of the dead mother in an early paragraph of the first chapter, a remark which leads

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Hughes to observe perceptively that in Gissing’s fiction in general, there is “an obscure economy of feeling whereby to feel for another person seems only possible where that person is necessarily reduced to unhappiness, and so converted into a kind of uncommunicating state of pitiable powerlessness and abject isolation. Conversely, happiness or pleasure as to do with animated human reciprocity is resented. It appears as an idyll of memory or fantasy, a facile expression of vanity, or of a dangerously heedless obliviousness. Pity and irony are the mutually implicated if divergent means, then, whereby in Gissing’s fiction the text’s contradictory affective and analytic attitudes make up a complex narrative system of thought and feeling at the level of expression.” The themes of oddity, loneliness, alienation and jealousy spin the plot, and they are interwoven in a complex manner which never smacks in the least of authorial manipulation as they do in ordinary Victorian fiction and even sometimes in the best, witness George Eliot’s extreme difficulties with the two plots of *Daniel Deronda*, which will not merge smoothly. There is in most characters of *The Odd Women* a self-defeating behaviour, a sense of wrong which repeats itself in a form which, Hughes thinks, “cannot be countenanced or heard within society’s norms.” And he takes as a characteristic example Gissing’s remarkable presentation of Widdowson’s obsessive jealousy, “an attempt to overcome loneliness through the incarceration of the beloved, to overcome a distance and a separation from Monica that merely confirms it and makes it absolute.” Who would fail to agree with the critic that, in *The*

Odd Women, “separation between people, even within relationships, is presented as the order of things [...] The law of Gissing’s text is that the attempt to compensate for the abuses of law leads to an enthrallment every bit as absolute and far more disquieting.” At bottom, and this sums up Hughes’s deep-felt conviction, “the unconscious can constitute a more pitiless and remorseless, because habitual and demoralizing, machinery of oppression than that of social norms.” Here is indeed a new approach to the novel which renders somewhat unsubtle the continuing debate on Gissing’s feminism and anti-feminism. Seen in this light the character of Rhoda seems to be “as much a victim of psychological determinism, an oppressed consciousness seeking a compensatory self-aggrandizement, as any of the other characters.” The traditional social approach to this and other novels is shaken down to its foundations by such a view of the fate of the main characters. Hughes sums up his point in an appropriate metaphor: the characters inhabit psychological torture chambers. In conclusion, one may ask oneself –

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where is Deleuze in all this? To this reader he is something of an intellectual intruder, a guest who feels ill at ease in the Gissing chapter. He does intervene by proxy, but he is content to mouth indigestible abstractions. Deleuze speaks above or below Gissing. They only meet, uneasily, in the critic’s mind. But does it matter? In a sense it matters less than to quote Gissing accurately on p. 128, where a sentence from the novel might make some readers believe that the novelist could not make a difference between *who* and *whom*, less also than an unwarranted tendency to reform the spelling of some names (why Edward Bertz? why half a dozen times David Gryllis?). It is useful to give in the bibliography the date of the first publication of a book when the edition quoted is not the first edition, but it is misleading to say that *Charles Dickens, A Critical Study* was first published in 1896.

The chapter on Gissing (ch. 4) in *The Feminine Political Novel in Victorian England* by Barbara Leah Harman is devoted to *In the Year of Jubilee*. A minority of readers will recollect that an earlier, somewhat different version, entitled “Going Public: Female Emancipation in George Gissing’s *In the Year of Jubilee*” appeared in the Fall 1992 number of *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, pp. 347-74. The new text, “Crowds and Marriage in *In the Year of Jubilee*” points to a reorientation of Professor Harman’s enquiry. The epithet “political” in the title of the book is to be understood in the most general sense, and the subject the author deals with is aptly summed up in the phrase “going public.” Like other essays by Robert Selig and John Sloan, the present one will henceforth rank as a major interpretation of *In the Year of Jubilee*, which has been rather less exposed to constructive criticism than the two major novels published just before and after, *The Odd Women* and *The Whirlpool*. Unlike some of her predecessors, men as well as women, who have discussed the complex nature and fluctuating limits of Gissing’s feminism, Professor Harman’s approach to her subject is commendably quiet and refreshingly devoid of partisanship. She begins with a well-documented overview of Gissing’s opinions about female education based on his statements in Vols. I to V of the *Collected Letters*, goes on with a detailed analysis of the major themes of the novel as illustrated by the impulses and predicaments of the leading characters, Nancy Lord foremost among them, and concludes with a discussion of the relationship between Lionel Tarrant and his wife as depicted at the end of the novel. The unity of the novel lies in the thematic harmony between the publicity wars and the underlying sex wars. “The competition among marketplace producers for the attention of consumers results in the shameless self-display and commodification of

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prostitution (advertisements are ‘daubed effigies’) and this, in turn, is represented – reflected, imitated, reproduced – in the competition among women for the attention and interest of men.”

The novel derives its dynamic force from the constant contrasts between exposure and concealment, private and public behaviour. To those critics who have objected to the presence of melodramatic elements in some phases of the action – Mrs. Damerel is a resurgence of a human type present in the early novels – it might be answered that her doings harmonize with those of the various characters who make themselves guilty of fraud, blackmail and speculation. Barbara Leah Harman moves with consummate ease in the dark alleys of this scarlet and black novel. She has a strong sense of situational ambiguities and expresses some dilemmas forcefully. Thus, she writes: “When Beatrice French confronts [Nancy] with the knowledge that she has borne a child, eager to confirm that Luckworth Crewe is – or rather isn’t – the father, Nancy is placed in the position either of revealing her marriage and exposing her fraud, or concealing her marriage and exposing her shame.” Is it too much to hope that Professor Harman will some day write a full-length critical study of Gissing’s work? The other novels discussed in the present work are *Shirley*, *North and South*, *Diana of the Crossways* and Elizabeth Robins’s *The Convert*. On the whole, the book is well printed, but some spelling mistakes are difficult to account for. Why is Alma Rolfe’s surname, which is correctly spelt in the chapter on *The Convert*, oddly written Rolphe in that on *In the Year of Jubilee*? Marian Yule, called Marion on p. 112, only recovers her true identity on p. 144. There are also a few errors in the bibliography.

The Greek rendering of *New Grub Street* published in 1995 which we discovered belatedly earlier this year could only be reviewed adequately by a Greek specialist of modern English literature capable of passing judgment on the quality of the translation. Externally the volume, with its 674 pages, reminds one of the hundreds published by the Editions Gallimard in their Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. Bound in brown imitation cloth, it has a white jacket, on which only Gissing’s name, above an 1893 portrait by Alfred Ellis, is in Roman characters. That Gissing would have been delighted to see one of his novels in Greek translation is obvious, and his delight would be increased, if he were still alive, by his presence among dozens of writers of world-wide reputation – his predecessors Dickens and Thackeray, his contemporary Conrad as well as some masters of the French novel to whom he looked up with admiration, Balzac and

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Flaubert. To us it is pleasing to see listed in the same Library two books by Dominique Fernandez, who praised his *By the Ionian Sea*, and whom we quote under “Notes and News.” The seven-page introduction is partly biographical, partly oriented toward a few essential aspects of the novel discussed by the American literary historian Edward Wagenknecht, Raymond Williams and Peter Keating.

Only a few words can be said of Philip R. Bishop’s biographical and bibliographical study of Thomas Bird Mosher, who is well known to Gissing collectors as one of those inter-war publishers who reprinted some of his works very tastefully, but without permission. He reissued *By the Ionian Sea* in 1920, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* in 1921 and 1928, after first doing Gissing proud with selections from the latter volume under the title *Books and the Quiet Life* in 1914, reprinted in 1922. Odds and ends from Gissing’s pen also appeared in Mosher’s little literary periodical *The Bibelot* (1895-1915), and in *Amphora: A Collection of Prose and Verse* (1912). In this splendidly illustrated quarto volume devoted to Mosher’s piratical activities will be found answers to all the questions about him that the Gissing collector is likely to ask himself. However, Bruce Garland had already answered the main ones, as acknowledged by Philip Bishop, in the January 1976 number of the *Gissing Newsletter*.

Pierre Coustillas

* * *

Notes and News

Complete bibliographies being the rarest of things, one often comes across books containing references to Gissing's works that have escaped the notice of bibliographers. A number of examples were offered recently by correspondents or discovered by chance. A quotation from *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* – "I hate and fear science..." – in such a forgotten autobiography as Monica Mary Hutchings's *The Walnut Tree* (1951) is surely unexpected, but less so the dozen entries devoted to Gissing in *The British Museum in Fiction: A Check-list*, by Edward F. Ellis (Buffalo, 1981). In the preface to this well-printed compilation Gissing and John Stewart (b. 1906) are said to be the authors who provided the greatest number of entries. Dictionaries of quotations usually fail to include anything by Gissing, although there are signs that compilers of such volumes are beginning to turn to his work and not unprofitably.

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An early omission in this journal was the *Faber Book of Aphorisms*, edited by W. H. Auden and Louis Kronenberger, first published in 1964. "Persistent prophecy is a familiar way of assuring the event," wrote Gissing in *Henry Ryecroft*, Summer VII. But where did he remark that "principles always become a matter of vehement discussion when practice is at ebb"? Recently Eberhard Puntsch in his *Das neue Zitatenhandbuch. Eine besondere Auswahl aus drei Jahrtausenden*, subtitled *Zitate, die man nicht überall findet* (Augsburg: Weltbild Verlag, 1996), also quoted from *Henry Ryecroft* (Winter, XXIV): "Time is money... money is time." The notion had first been expressed in *The Unclassed*. It now appears that German scholars have not ignored Gissing as solidly as one used to believe. Thus Ewald Standop and Edgar Mertner, in their *Englische Literaturgeschichte* (1967), devoted a few well-informed paragraphs to him in the fourth impression of their book (Heidelberg: Quelle und Meyer, 1983), mentioning several Harvester critical editions among similar recent reissues. In a two-volume work of the same kind, *Die englische Literatur*, four German scholars, the best known of whom is Willi Erzgräber, also dealt fairly with his work (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991), Vol. I, pp. 202, 205, 459, 474; Vol. II, pp. 181-83. Yet another volume, *Englische Literaturgeschichte*, edited by Hans Ulrich Seeber (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1991), mentions him in several significant contexts.

On the English side we should have noted long ago the availability of Henry James's essay on Gissing in a selection of his literary criticism (*The Critical Muse*, Penguin Books, 1987) and – a discovery made by Professor Ian Deary – the publication of a booklet privately printed by two London admirers of Gissing, *Three Stories by George Gissing: A Poor Gentleman, Under an Umbrella, The Prize Lodger* (Christmas 1984). It turns out that these two Londoners also issued in the same way two other booklets (*A Victim of Circumstances: The Story of an Artist in Glastonbury*, Christmas 1986, and *Fate and the Apothecary*, Christmas 1987), and possibly one more, also in the 1980s. All of them are illustrated. Almost simultaneously, Patrick Larkin reported the presence of "The Firebrand" and Karina Of of "The Prize Lodger" in two booklets, edited and translated by Richard Fenzl, that were published in their bilingual series by Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag of Munich. The two small volumes are respectively entitled *Victorian Stories* (1990) and *Love and Marriage* (1996). In each case Gissing is in the company of such well known contemporaries as Hardy, Moore and Arthur Morrison. Richard Fenzl, a

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translator with a long list of publications who is equally at ease with English and French texts, hopes to do more for Gissing.

Two volumes of great interest by modern masters of travel literature, the availability of which has also been reported by the German translator of *The Odd Women*, must be linked up with *By the Ionian Sea – Mère Méditerranée*, by Dominique Fernandez (first published in 1965) and *The Pillars of Hercules* by Paul Theroux (1995, currently obtainable in Penguin Books). The former book is divided into four parts: Naples, the South, Sardinia and Sicily. In several chapters, Fernandez, who read Gissing's book in the Italian version of Margherita Guidacci, was in his footsteps. He relates how, at Cosenza, he came upon François Lenormant's seminal three-volume study of Magna Graecia, reproduced photographically from the first edition published by A. Lévy in Paris from 1881 to 1884, a book so scarce that finding a copy in France would be nothing short of a miracle. And he connects it with the work of Gissing and Norman Douglas, to whom it was so familiar. Fernandez deplors that *By the Ionian Sea* and *Old Calabria* have remained unknown to French readers. "In few books about Italy, however, does one find, mingled with impressions of museums, ruins, castles and churches, such a deep knowledge of the country itself and so much intelligent curiosity about its inhabitants. Few writers make one share to such an extent, in accordance with the wish expressed by Larbaud, (who should have mentioned them along with Stendhal and Butler), in Italian life and the life they experienced in Italy." Whereupon Fernandez takes us to a number of places, such as Cosenza, Taranto, Metaponto, Crotona and Reggio, to which Gissing devotes chapters in *By the Ionian Sea*.

Paul Theroux's approach to his subject thirty years later is very much the same and the two writers remind us of H. V. Morton's journey a little earlier. Theroux travelled with some of Gissing's adventures and recollections in mind, too, notably when he recounts his impressions of Reggio, Metaponto, Crotona and Cape Colonna. He also went to Taranto, where his Gissing memories were superseded by a chance encounter with a Japanese girl who, to his questions about her knowledge of Italian and English could only – truthfully – answer "poco." Much has been written, in particular by Ignazio Trombetta in recent years, about foreign travellers in Italy since the eighteenth century, but early in the twenty-first century, which is looming ahead more and more threateningly, some traveller-cum-scholar will have to write a book on foreign

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travellers to the shores of the Ionian Sea. Could Gissing ever hope that he would have followers as much interested in his own journey as in the civilization of what had once been Magna Graecia? Currently the Germans have an advantage over the French – they can read both Fernandez and Theroux in their own language, and it is earnestly hoped that they will soon be able to read *By the Ionian Sea* as well.

Gissing's name appeared fairly frequently in the English press in the late summer, notably in reviews of Wells's correspondence (4 vols.) and of Orwell's collected works (20 vols.) In late July (undated press cutting) Peter Ackroyd reviewed in *The Times* the twenty tomes superbly edited by Peter Davison. He observed that Orwell's style has become well known, partly from his own apothegm that "good prose is like a window pane," commenting snappishly: "This is a half-truth at best and cannot even be used to describe those writers, such as Dickens and Gissing, whom Orwell himself most admired." If occasionally Gissing's name occurs where it is not expected, it does not always where it should be. Thus Sarah Boxer, in an illustrated obituary of Tazio Secchiaroli, the seventy-three-year-old celebrity-hounding photographer, in the *New York Times* for 25 July, admitted that "there are a number of theories about the name Papparazzo. Some say it is a contraction of the Italian words papagallo (parrot) and ragazzo (guy). Fellini was quoted as saying he chose it because it was the name of a childhood friend of his 'who liked to imitate the buzzing sounds of pesky insects.'" When an e-mail from one of his countrymen reached the editor of the *New York Times*, giving him the clue to the mystery, he disregarded it.

Truth has always been a heavy plodder.

Ample compensation came from other quarters – in the English press. In the *Mail on Sunday* for 30 August, Ann Widdecombe, MP, declared under the title “My last good read”: “Just read *The Nether World* by George Gissing [Oxford University Press, £6.99]. A heart-rending portrayal of poverty. More readable than Dickens, but also vastly more depressing. Gissing is a quite unjustly neglected author.” D. J. Taylor, on his part, generously wrote in the *Guardian* (G2, 23 September, p. 4): “George Gissing (1857-1903) is a good example of how a tireless supporter aided by a sympathetic publisher can work wonders for a superannuated author. Gissing’s great champion is Professor Pierre Coustillas, who, beginning in the late 1960s and helped by John Spiers of the Harvester Press, started to put his 20 or so novels back into print. More editions followed (OUP, Hogarth Press, Everyman Paperbacks) culminating in a

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nine-volume collected letters. Next year will see the first Gissing conference, in Belgium [actually Amsterdam] oddly. Gissing’s revival is real, tangible; his place now looks increasingly secure.”

To conclude, two notes on the sad end of Gissing’s life. Professor Deary has exhumed from the *Literary Year Book* for 1904 an unsigned obituary which is so strikingly different from and superior in literary quality to the average obituary published in English dailies, weeklies and monthlies that one would like to trace its authorship if possible. Suggestions about the ways of tackling such a difficulty would be gratefully received. The other item worth noting is an interesting article on “Gissing’s Grave in St. Jean de Luz” which appeared recently on the internet (rmonk@globalnet.co.uk). The author relates at some length his difficulties in finding the grave, misled as he was by Ellen Gissing’s erroneous statement that her brother was buried in the English cemetery at St. Jean de Luz. But he did find it, and on leaving the place after taking photographs, “could almost imagine the funeral party, including Gabrielle Fleury, GG’s love, gathering outside the walls of the cemetery afterwards, consoling each other’s grief.” The oddity of the whole piece does not lie in Mr. Monk imagining Gabrielle attending the funeral – she did not attend it, as is made clear in Vol. 9 of the *Collected Letters*. It lies in the final statement that the Anglican church where the service was held, “is no longer a church, but some kind of commercial premises – a carpet shop, I think!” Now Mr. Monk’s visit took place “some years ago,” as indeed did the latest one of the editor of this journal (early March 1995), who failed to notice that the church had become a shop. So a question is raised – which of the two visitors was there last?

Recent Publications

Volumes

George Gissing, *Khumkkunum munindurui kori (New Grub Street)*, Seoul: Gimm-Young Co, Publishers, 1995. 2 vols. Pictorial soft covers, grey, yellow and green for Vol. I, grey, yellow and purple for Vol. II. 370 + 375 pp. ISBN 89-349-0214-0 03840 (Vol. I), 89-349-0222-1 03840 (Vol. II). Translation and translator’s postscript by Song Ro. – It

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should be noted that a Korean translation of *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, entitled *Bom yeoreum ga-eul gyeoul* and translated by Hye Kim (Seoul: Beomjosa) was published in 1979. Thanks to Mrs O, who succeeded in locating a library copy in her country, and to Professor Fumio Hojoh, we can give the basic bibliographical details. The book is a one-volume translation, 291 pages long, with a pictorial front cover on which landscapes representing the four seasons are reproduced. The text is followed by notes compiled by the translator.

George Gissing, *Mukaiyu-no Hitobito (The Unclassed; a literal translation of the title)*, Tokyo: Koyosha Shuppan, 1998. Cream-coloured decorated boards with black titling. The pictorial dust-jacket is similar to the pictorial ornamentation on the boards. [viii] + 320 pp. 3,000 yen. No ISBN number. Publisher's address 1-5-15 Osaka-ne, Mino-shi, Tokyo, Japan 191-0061. The publication date is given as 10 June 1998. The translators, Saburo and Harumi Kuramochi, are known for their translations of *The Odd Women* (1989) and *The Nether World* (1992). The text is preceded by a list of the main characters (p. vi) and a map of London, and followed by the translators' notes and postscript.

George Gissing, *The Odd Women*, New York and London: Norton, [1998]. Third impression in the new format of the edition first published in 1971.

Articles, reviews, etc.

Stephen D. Arata, "Realism, Sympathy, and Gissing's Fictions of Failure," *Victorian Institute Journal* (University of Virginia). Vol. 23 (1995), pp. 27-49. A major essay on Gissing's fiction as a whole. A 1901 Elliott & Fry portrait of him is reproduced on the front cover of this annual journal.

G. Rulli, "Recensioni," *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 15 May 1998, p. 418. Review of *Sur les rives de la mer Ionienne*.

Phil Hammond, "The Westgate run: an alternative guide to the street," *The Express* (Wakefield), 31 July 1998, p. 12. A few lines on *A Life's Morning* and a photograph of Westgate in the days of tramlines.

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Peter Ackroyd, "Let poor writers be readers: British Library fees are abominable," *The Times*, 13 August 1998, p. 18. Quotes from the *Ryecroft Papers*: "At a time when I was literally starving in London...without a care." Ackroyd's admirable attack on the plans made by the British Library to charge users an annual fee of £300 was relayed by the *Times Literary Supplement* on 28 August. The same journal for 25 September informs its readers that the plans have been abandoned.

Angelika Overath, "Im Zeichen der Ehe," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 29-30 August 1998, p. 68. A perceptive review of the German translation of *The Odd Women*, *Die überzähligen Frauen*. [Apologies for the misprint in our last number, p. 40, last line.] With Rothenstein's portrait of Gissing.

Debbie McDonald, "August 3rd, 1948 Death of Clara Collet," *History Today*, August 1998, pp. 27-28. An article commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Clara Collet's death by a writer currently at work on a biography of her.

Mark Storey, "Reviews," *Review of English Studies*, August 1998, pp. 384-85. Review of Vol. 9 of the *Collected Letters*.

Valentine Cunningham, "Commentary: Unto him (or her) that hath: How Victorian writers made ends meet," *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 September 1998, pp. 12-13. Gissing and his character Jasper Milvain are mentioned several times.

Stephen Moss and D. J. Taylor. "The Next Chapter," *Guardian (and Guardian International)* G2, 23 September 1998, p. 4. A discussion of various attempts made to revive interest in the works of dead authors. The case of Gissing and his French champion is mentioned as significant. One of the portraits taken by Russell & Sons in January 1895 is reproduced. See Notes and News.

Philip R. Bishop, *Thomas Bird Mosher, Pirate Prince of Publishers: A Comprehensive Bibliography & Source Guide to the Mosher Books Reflecting England's National Literature & Design*, New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, and London: British Library, 1998. Describes all the Gissing books published by Mosher. See "Book Reviews."

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Information for Contributors

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

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