

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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Eustace Glazzard: The Schopenhauerian Dilemma

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Many critics have drawn attention to the influence, “ubiquitous” for David Grylls,¹ exercised on Gissing by the reading of Schopenhauer. The points raised concern namely: “pessimism,” “misogyny,” “the will to live” with its attendant misery, and finally “aesthetic contemplation,” considered as the sole means of deliverance from this misery. The works mainly quoted are *Workers in the Dawn* (1880) and *The Unclassed* (1884), where the references are explicit, and others such as *New Grub Street* (1891), and *The Whirlpool* (1897), where they are not. It has also been suggested by Pierre Coustillas that from *The Unclassed* on “there is an undercurrent of Schopenhauerian thoughts and attitudes in Gissing’s most characteristic works,” for instance in *Isabel Clarendon* (1886), *Thyrza* (1887), *The Nether World* (1889), and *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903),² and by C. J. Francis that “the ideas of Schopenhauer pervaded Gissing’s work.”³

This answers an objection which might be raised on account of the paucity of references to Schopenhauer, not only in his novels but in his letters (only five, one of which is indirect), and in his Diary (only two, of which only one is explicit, noting in 1895 that he had read some Schopenhauer, “first time for long”).⁴ Altogether, the notions of “ubiquity,” “pervasion” and

“undercurrent” just referred to would appear to express the situation perfectly.

In the present writer’s experience, undercurrents, both hydrological and mental, have resurgences, and one of these is *Denzil Quarrier* (1892),⁵ which has not been mentioned, as far as I know, in discussions about the influence of Schopenhauer.

This is perhaps because it has always been considered as one of Gissing’s “minor” novels. In the first place it appeared, to some of the earlier critics and readers, and even to later ones, a

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little difficult to classify in the generally known context of Gissing’s fiction. Although placed in a “political setting” as the author himself announced, it cannot be classed together with *Our Friend the Charlatan* (1901) as, for example, the political novels of Trollope can be classed together. Although the ostensible “heroes” are both motivated to some extent by political ambition, and both fundamentally incapable of achieving their goals, the resemblance stops there. *The Charlatan* is essentially a study of the intellectual dishonesty which characterizes as much Dyce Lashmar as the people who surround him. He is the main character in the book, for without him the story would not exist.

Denzil Quarrier is very different. The eponymous “hero” is not the main character. He is admittedly unstable, superficial and unfitted for political life, like Lashmar, but he is also less interesting, perhaps because less minutely presented from the psychological point of view, as is the rather stereotypic Lilian (for Halperin “the most sympathetic character in the book”).⁶ The impression is that Gissing was not greatly interested in them himself. They are in reality minor characters, merely the victims of two persons who *are* the principal characters: Eustace Glazzard and Mrs. Wade, for it is without them that the story would not exist.

Now this fact displaces the reader’s attention. He is, as it were, made to follow a wrong track, and tends to focus on Denzil and Lilian, and to ignore Gissing’s subtle hints as to what is, perhaps, a more fundamental issue. Even Jacob Korg managed to make a summary of the novel without mentioning Mrs. Wade, except at the very end, when she is referred to merely as foreshadowing “Gissing’s interest in the woman question.”⁷

This displacement of interest obviously baffled the first critics, many of whom further displaced the problem by endeavouring to show what excellent character-studies Denzil and Lilian are. As this position is obviously untenable, later critics have attacked the problem in other ways, notably by re-opening the debate on “motivation.” For, and this was, and always has been, the major objection to the book, the actions of Glazzard and Mrs. Wade did appear to be unmotivated to many of the first readers of the novel.

The story seemed implausible to many because the lives of two innocent persons are ruined by two other persons who have apparently no valid reason for doing so. “Somewhat unaccountable,” wrote George Cotterell in the *Academy*, referring to Glazzard’s conduct,⁸ “so objectless, so purely malicious and spiteful, to be scarcely human,” pronounced another

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reviewer,⁹ while an unsigned review in *The Times* sums up the situation:

The first question is whether any sufficient reason is shown why this familiar friend should have committed an act of deliberate perfidy. The traitor himself ‘is not sure that he understands why he dit it.’ We are afraid it is becoming too common a trick among novelists to take refuge in the incalculable in human nature as a substitute for intelligible motive.¹⁰

Exactly so. The “trick” had been, and was being used by James, Conrad and others and

would culminate perhaps in Lafcadio's "acte gratuit" in *Les Caves du Vatican*, but at the time it was distrusted by many critics, and above all, it did not appear to be "typical" or "characteristic" of Gissing, who was in some measure a victim of literary stereotypes created by himself.

Both critics and readers feel a need to classify a writer, to pigeon-hole him, as it were, as self-protection, in order to know what to expect of him, and not feel at a loss when dealing with him. Gissing often baffled this desire by his variety and unexpectedness, and the need to find a common denominator is everywhere apparent in the history of Gissing criticism. This has resulted in many different appraisals being made by different critics at different times of the same book.¹¹ People had, and still have, their personal feelings about Gissing. They imagine they know what he should write or what he was capable of writing. A typical comment is that of the *Times Literary Supplement* summing up Gissing's career: "He tended, however, more and more, to write of things and persons beyond the reach of his experience. [...] *Will Warburton* [...] is characteristic Gissing, but not good Gissing."¹² But as was remarked many years later: "it is only possible to take such novels as *The Unclassed* or *Born in Exile* as 'typical Gissing' if we have previously made up our minds what 'typical Gissing' is."¹³

In fine, *Denzil Quarrier*, "focusing on a subject in which the novelist in fact had little interest, is pitched at several removes from his own life and remains one of his least inspired productions"¹⁴ and "one of his less successful works,"¹⁵ given that "the farther Gissing gets away from himself, the less interesting his books turn out to be,"¹⁶ to quote a critic of the "autobiographical" school. According to others, it is "the least worthwhile"¹⁷ of the novels of this period, "as nearly worthless as anything he ever wrote,"¹⁸ and has thus been unduly neglected when it has not been the object of appreciations such as that of Allan Monkhouse: "a melodrama in morals depending for its limited interest on two crimes committed by persons of culture and sensibility."¹⁹

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All in all, nevertheless, the book's reception at the time was not wholly unfavourable. But this was perhaps for reasons that may appear more questionable to-day. In the first place, Gissing was already a highly-esteemed writer, and people were reluctant to criticize outright.²⁰ Again the "melodrama" still appealed to some sections of the reading public. And finally, the "political setting" had applications to Gissing's day. Indeed, one reviewer heartily wished "that Mr. Gissing had confined himself to politics."²¹ But these are hardly the most significant features of the book.

As remarked above, the negative criticism usually hinged upon the "lack of motivation." However, a lot of water has run under the critical bridges since then, and this is no longer the stricture that it constituted at the time, more recent writing dissociating the ostensible "plots" or "subjects" of the novel from the novelist's treatment of them, by placing him in the cultural context of the day, and attempting to answer the question: what is the text actually expressing apart from the bald "facts" recounted? This approach allows a considerable amount of interpretative liberty and may lead to arbitrary conclusions unless the analysis is supported by constant reference to the text under discussion, but careful use of it may lead to a complete reappraisal of the book. An illuminating example of this is an article by B. R. Walker, entitled aptly, if somewhat paradoxically, "Gissing out of context," in which he shows that *Denzil Quarrier* is fundamentally a study of the complex and contradictory nature of human relationships.²²

I agree with this, and would like to go a step further in the same direction: *Denzil Quarrier* is all this, but it is something more.

It is clear that the “weak motivation”²³ with which the book in general has often been reproached can refer only to the actions of Eustace Glazzard, and to a lesser extent, of Mrs. Wade, since the motivations of Denzil and Lilian have nothing mysterious about them. Thus, from the start, these characters were seen by critics to constitute some kind of flaw in the novel.

Later critics, attempting more subtle analyses, like that of Walker, have insisted on the fact that action may and does follow on some “trivial,” “eccentric” or “irrational” motive,²⁴ but even at this stage of critical evolution, the existence of *some* motive is apparently a *sine qua non*. I would like to suggest that this kind of explanation may relate to common sense or to psychology, but that it is not necessarily relevant to literature as such, nor to writing like Gissing’s which is underpinned by the history of ideas. The absence of motivation may, on the

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contrary, represent a significant aspect of a novel.

For if one reads the text attentively, it is, in effect, difficult to find *sufficient* reason for Glazzard’s and Mrs. Wade’s malicious actions. Mrs. Wade has been explained away by “jealousy.” If one agrees to accept the psychological approach, one can admit that hints are indeed given that she does not like Lilian and would like to gain Denzil’s esteem, if not his affection. It is also possible that she despises Lilian as being the type of woman that the Women’s Movement would like to eliminate. But to this it may be objected that on one hand it is hardly likely that the rather superficial Denzil could arouse such passion in Mrs. Wade, nor that she herself could suppose that he would be attracted to an older, plainer widow in preference to his pretty and adoring young wife, and on the other hand that supporters of the Women’s Movement usually stopped short of murdering their frailer sisters. For to all intents and purposes the actions – and non-actions in this case – of Mrs. Wade amount to murder, and premeditated murder at that, as can be gathered from the account of her struggles and torment before, during and after the crime. If this is jealousy it is jealousy of a particular kind, which Gissing will describe in *The Whirlpool*: “Jealousy without love, a passion scarcely intelligible to the ordinary man, is in woman common enough, and more often productive of disaster than the jealousy which originates in nobler feeling.”²⁵

In her study on “Gissing’s *The Whirlpool* and Schopenhauer,” Gisela Argyle has shown how this remark derives from *Parerga und Paralipomena*.²⁶ May not the same source account for Mrs. Wade’s feelings, “scarcely intelligible” to the “ordinary man,” and the ensuing “disaster,” contrasted with Lilian’s “nobler feeling”? If this is psychology, then it is Schopenhauerian psychology. Which brings grist to our mill.

For it is not so easy to account for Glazzard, who represents, and has always represented, the main stumbling-block in the vexed question of motivation. Reacting against the charge that Glazzard’s actions are “unaccountable,” Pierre Coustillas has pointed out “many details showing the great pains Gissing took to justify Glazzard’s conduct” from Ch. III onwards, invoking Denzil’s tone when addressing his friend, and concluding that “many a person, in the place of Glazzard, would at least wish to give Quarrier a rap on the knuckles for his rather insolent remarks.”²⁷ If this is perfectly plausible at a certain level, it must also be admitted that Quarrier’s tone is “bantering” throughout the novel, even sometimes when conversing with Lilian, and that as Quarrier and Glazzard were “old friends” (which point is also heavily insisted

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upon), the latter should have been accustomed to it. At all events it seems an insufficient point of departure for a man who aims at ruining his friend’s career and personal life. A “rap on the knuckles” should indeed have sufficed. But I will return to this later.

Other critics have insisted on Glazzard’s Parliamentary ambitions which run counter to

Denzil's. Even admitting that this could contribute to Glazzard's mounting irritation (partly caused by his own incapacity for action), it must be remembered that originally he had no such aspirations himself; on the contrary he "would never have dreamt of such a thing until Stark suggested it" (p. 69), he simply wanted to "sit there" (p. 69), a significant point to which I will also return later. Thus professional jealousy plays no part in this strange situation. In actual fact Glazzard's action in exposing Denzil's illegal situation in order to ruin his career *has* no valid justification, and Gissing is at some pains to insist on *this* point, throughout the book to the very conclusion. But Gissing had a public to consider. What might have appeared completely arbitrary to some readers was unacceptable. As in the case of Mrs. Wade, Gissing seems to have scattered some apparent "clues" throughout his text, but they do not stand up to examination, and are perhaps mere "sops to Cerberus." The explanation may lie elsewhere. Even Walker's minute analysis leaves Glazzard somewhat unaccounted for, and the author concludes: "Gissing leaves the reader to search for a truth about Glazzard within his own experience of life."²⁸ This I shall now proceed to do.

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One of the strangest comments on Glazzard was made by Gissing himself in his well-known response to Bertz: "I wish you could have liked Eustace Glazzard. I thought the man painfully human."²⁹ This is indeed an unexpected remark to make on all counts. In the first place, nobody could possibly "like" Glazzard; in the second place, Gissing appears to be referring to someone ("the man") he has met, which shows the depth of personal feeling involved, and finally the conjunction of the words "painfully" and "human" is indicative not only of Gissing's poor opinion of humanity in general, but of the notion that certain feelings, reactions and attitudes normally deemed reprehensible by men may, in fact, be no more than *typically* human; and this, finally, is the reason why the reader is expected to "like" not the man, but this character-study of a recognisable type of person who had come within Gissing's experience, the only problem being that judging by the book's reception, few of his readers had

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made a similar encounter;³⁰ although Gissing might quite legitimately have surmised that Bertz had recognised a character met with everywhere in the pages of *The World as Will and Idea*.³¹

I am not suggesting here that Gissing consciously drew this portrait "after Schopenhauer," but only insisting on the fact that if ideas played a major part in Gissing's life, he did not consider them as mere abstractions, a kind of philosophical game. As early as 1883 he wrote to Algernon: "Philosophy has done all it can for me, and now scarcely interests me any more." This statement has often been interpreted as a "rejection" of philosophy. In that case, how are we to reconcile this with the passage which immediately follows?

My attitude henceforth is that of the artist pure & simple. The world is for me a collection of phenomena, which are to be studied & reproduced artistically. In the midst of the most serious complications of life, I find myself suddenly possessed with a great calm, withdrawn, as it were, from the immediate interests of the moment, & able to regard everything as a picture.³²

In other words, "the pleasure of the beautiful, the true delight in art" has lifted the artist "out of real existence" and made him a "disinterested spectator of it" (*World*, Bk. IV, § 57, p. 405). A more Schopenhauerian declaration could not be imagined. Gissing has not "rejected" philosophy, as is often said. He has absorbed it, and if it can do nothing more for him, it is

because it is already part of his life. Ideas were “real” for Gissing in the pragmatic sense, i.e., they produced “effects” which could not be discarded off-hand, effects on his own “mind-growth” and that of others, which he observed and made re-live in his “fiction.” This was the attitude of a philosopher. If he rejected anything, it was metaphysical and scientific speculation insofar as it concerned abstractions having no effect on, or relation to, one’s conduct in life. The situation would appear to be more accurately assessed by Coustillas and Bridgwater, thus: “whatever remained of it [his interest in metaphysics] was kept alive by his continuing interest in Schopenhauer, in whose work no sharp distinction between metaphysics and moral philosophy is to be found.”³³ Gissing, like Schopenhauer, was not so much a metaphysician as a moralist, a psychologist and an artist, all of which enabled him to create, or rather re-create, the typically Schopenhauerian figure of the chronically dissatisfied and ironically named Eustace, a figure whom most readers, in actual fact, must have met at some time in their lives.

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For Glazzard is indeed not an exception, but resembles closely the ordinary man whom the philosopher evokes continually in his writings as representing a kind of intermediate stage between the animal and the genius. But the displacement of attention referred to above is probably responsible for the neglect of this character, who, in a different context, may be considered as a most significant and revealing element of the book, torn as he is between the two poles of the Schopenhauerian conception of the world as “will” and “idea.”

Although he repudiates the term, Glazzard is first presented as some kind of “aesthete,” enjoying “much talk about pictures, books and music – delightful” and living amongst “works of pure inspiration” (pp. 16-20). He has some reputation as a “connoisseur” and, with his “familiar tone of authority on questions of art,” gives a categorical opinion on a picture he is asked to identify (pp. 20-21). He plays the piano for Lilian, and Denzil exclaims admiringly on his ability “to do so much in so many directions” (p. 37). When he pays court to Serena he discusses “art and literature” (p. 68). For Denzil, Glazzard “thinks it enough to doze on among his pictures, and that kind of thing” (p. 130). And throughout the book stress is laid on the fact that what Glazzard appreciates in every domain is the *visual* aspect of things. He judges Serena by her dress: “A bad sign, I’m afraid” (p. 66). After the train-wrecking he can imagine that the criminal had perhaps no other motive than “the wish to see what would happen” and that he would probably “have been standing somewhere in sight” (p. 156). Even during his crucial interview with Northway he notes that the bridge spoils the view and that “strangely enough, [he] could not feel as if this conversation greatly interested him,” for he was “gazing at the Suspension Bridge, at the woods beyond, at the sluggish river, and thought more of the view than of his interlocutor” (pp. 208-10). While envisaging the possibility of a “pulling-down” of Denzil, he compares himself to the criminal who “amused himself with the picture of a wrecked train long before he resolved to enjoy the sight in reality” (pp. 198-99). And in the event of Denzil’s downfall, “we shall look on and enjoy the situation” (p. 242). Even after his betrayal of Denzil he becomes so absorbed in the scene at the railway-station, described in great detail as though Glazzard himself were noting it, that “he forgot all else” (p. 243). Characteristically, the last time we meet him is at the Royal Academy, looking at the sculpture (p. 339).

However, although thus continually obsessed by the visual, Glazzard remains no more than a spectator. Early on in the book doubts are cast as to the real extent of his devotion to the

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arts in which Denzil wrongly thinks him to be “absorbed” (p. 191), and is shown to be in fact

incapable of that “contemplation” described by Schopenhauer, “the pure contemplation [...] which ends entirely in the object,” which “requires that a man should entirely forget himself and the relations in which he stands [...] leaving one’s own interests, wishes, and aims entirely out of sight, thus [...] entirely renouncing one’s own personality for a while” (*World*, Bk. III, § 36, p. 240). In spite of the impression he produces on some of his acquaintances, he appears to the reader as something of a dilettante, which will be confirmed by his brother’s opinion (p. 68) and his own confession: “I am an artist, though only half-baked” (p. 70). Of this incapacity he himself is indeed quite conscious. For although surrounded by “gems of art,” “works of pure inspiration, the best of old and new,” “such as should have made the room a temple of serenity,” he was “beset by embarrassments which a man of his stamp could ill endure” (pp. 18-19). It should perhaps be recalled here that Schopenhauer was financially independent, which certainly facilitated aesthetic contemplation. But Glazzard was no longer so, and Gissing was personally in a situation which enabled him to understand the implications of this. For it is here that the predicament of Schopenhauer’s “common mortal” (*ibid.*, *loc. cit.*, p. 241) becomes apparent: “it seemed to him that he should never again look with delight upon a picture, or feast his soul with music, or care to open a book” (p. 19).

For “the magic is at an end” as soon as another element than pure contemplation comes into play, as the philosopher says (*ibid.*, § 38, p. 256). “The common mortal [...] is [...] not capable, at least not continuously so, of observation that in every sense is wholly disinterested, as sensuous contemplation, strictly so called, is. He can turn his attention to things only so far as they have some relation to his will, however indirect it may be.” Which is why “the ordinary man does not linger long over the mere perception, does not fix his attention long on one object, but in all that is presented to him hastily seeks merely the concept under which it is to be brought, as the lazy man seeks a chair, and then it interests him no further. This is why he is so soon done with everything, with works of art, objects of natural beauty, and indeed everywhere with the truly significant contemplation of all the scenes of life” (*ibid.*, § 36, pp. 242-43).

This description aptly fits the case of Glazzard, whose collection and artistic activities no longer afford him any pleasure, preoccupied as he is by more mundane cares; it also accounts for the significant little incident occurring at the very beginning of the book when, asked to

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identify the picture, he immediately classifies it as “not Morland,” and pays no further attention to it, the only question concerning this picture being, presumably, whether he, or someone else, might wish to acquire it. His visual temperament does not make of him a contemplative in the Schopenhauerian sense, which implies a total merging of the subject and the object. He cannot forget himself and his desires, in other words that “will to live” which constitutes the very essence, “the inmost nature, the kernel, of every particular thing, and also of the whole” (*ibid.*, Bk. II, § 21, pp. 142-43).

Schopenhauer analyses in detail this situation and its consequences. He has already made a distinction between the will-to-live and its objects (or acts of will; *ibid.*, § 20, pp. 137-38). Will, he says, is something “fully and immediately comprehended, and is so familiar to us that we know and understand what will is far better than anything else whatever,” for “the concept of will [...] is of all possible concepts the only one which has its source *not* in the phenomenal [...] but comes from within, and proceeds from the most immediate consciousness of each of us, in which each of us knows his own individuality” (*ibid.*, § 22, pp. 144-45). But, he goes on, “the *will* as a thing in itself is quite different from its phenomenal appearance, and entirely free from all the forms of the phenomenal, into which it first passes when it manifests itself, and which therefore only concern its *objectivity*, and are foreign to the will itself [...] the will as a thing-in-itself lies outside the province of the principle of sufficient reason in all its forms, and is consequently completely groundless, although all its manifestations are entirely subordinated

to the principle of sufficient reason [...] It is [...] [a concept] which lies outside time and space” (*ibid.*, § 23, pp. 145-46, author’s italics).³⁴ What happens then, in the case of the ordinary man? Schopenhauer answers the question thus:

[E]very particular act of will of a knowing individual [...] has necessarily a motive without which that act would never have occurred; but [...] the motive determines only the act of will of a knowing being, at this time, in this place, and under these circumstances, as a particular act, but by no means determines that that being wills in general or wills in this manner; this is the expression of his intelligible character, which, as will itself, the thing-in-itself, is without ground, for it lies outside the province of the principle of sufficient reason. Therefore every man has permanent aims and motives by which he guides his conduct, and he can always give an account of his particular actions; but if he were asked why he wills at all, or why in general he wills to exist, he would have no answer, and the question would indeed seem to him meaningless; and this would be just the expression of his

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consciousness that he himself is nothing but will, whose willing stands by itself and requires more particular determination by motives only in its individual acts at each point of time” (*ibid.*, § 29, p. 213).

Will is “an endless striving” and this “shows itself in human endeavours and desires, which always delude us by presenting their satisfaction as the final end of will. As soon as we attain to them they no longer appear the same, and therefore they soon grow stale, are forgotten, and though not openly disowned, are yet always thrown aside as vanished illusions.” Consequently “we are fortunate enough if there still remains something to wish for and to strive after, that the game may be kept up of constant transition from desire to satisfaction, and from satisfaction to a new desire, the rapid course of which is called happiness, and the slow course sorrow, and does not sink into that stagnation that shows itself in fearful ennui that paralyses life, vain yearning without a definite object, deadening languour” (*ibid.*, § 29, pp. 214-15).

Which is precisely Glazzard’s situation. No art, no activity, can hold him for long, but he has previously been able to satisfy his desires as they come to him, which has procured him temporary happiness. Yet, as funds diminish, he has rapidly arrived at the unhappy state in which “he tasted the very dregs of ignoble anguish, and it seemed to him that he should never again look with delight upon a picture, or feast his soul with music, or care to open a book” (p. 19). “He gave up his modelling, and he doesn’t seem to paint much nowadays. The poor fellow has no object in life, that’s the worst of it,” comments Denzil (p. 53).

This analysis is confirmed by Glazzard himself in a conversation with his brother: “You don’t know what my life is and has been. Look! I must do something to make my blood circulate, or I shall furnish a case for the coroner one of these mornings. I want excitement. I have taken up one thing after another, and gone just far enough to understand that there’s no hope of reaching what I aimed at – superlative excellence; then the thing began to nauseate me” (p. 68).

He has arrived at a state, well described by Schopenhauer, when a man attempts to understand the nature of his own existence as such, “*independent[ly] of the objects of knowledge and will,*” which is impossible, for “as soon as we turn into ourselves to make the attempt, and seek for once to know ourselves fully by means of introspective reflection, we are lost in a bottomless void; we find ourselves like the hollow glass globe, from out of which a voice speaks whose cause is not to be found in it, and whereas we desired to comprehend

ourselves, we find, with a shudder, nothing but a vanishing spectre" (*ibid.*, Bk. IV, § 54, p. 358, note, author's italics).

In other words, Glazzard is a case of the will-to-live without object. This sensation of emptiness, of hollowness, of non-existence is characteristic of Glazzard whenever he starts to reflect. He is indeed possessed by the "vague yearning without a definite object." Consequently, when Mr. Stark suggests that he might go into politics, he catches hold of the idea eagerly, although he had never thought of it before. The justification he gives for accepting this suggestion pertains precisely to the awareness of this metaphysical void which inhabits him: politics is not his "real line," but it offers him "a chance of *living* for a few years." He does not expect to "make a figure in the House of Commons": he simply wants "to *sit* there, and *be* in the full current of *existence*" (pp. 68-69. The first italics are Gissing's, the others mine).

Glazzard's will-to-live has merely crystallised itself on yet another phenomenon which presents itself in the purely circumstantial manner described by Schopenhauer. He is under the illusion that to "be" (not to "do") something in Parliament will change his life radically. Not so, replies the philosopher: "As Nature is consistent, so is the character; every action must take place in accordance with it, just as every phenomenon takes place according to a law of Nature: the causes in the latter case and the motives in the former are merely the occasional causes [...] The will, whose phenomenon is the whole being and life of man, cannot deny itself in the particular case, and what the man wills on the whole, that will he also will in the particular case." Man is what he is, once and for all, he adds, but it is only little by little that he comes to know himself (*ibid.*, § 55, pp. 377, ff.). Whatever one may think of this psychological determinism, it certainly fits Glazzard's case. To the end he will be seeking his way in life "together with all that might at any time become his way. Thus he makes topographical notes in the widest sense [...]" (*ibid.*, Bk. III, § 36, p. 243).

For what Glazzard is seeking, fundamentally, is a proof of his own existence. But, Schopenhauer notes, this kind of quest is doomed to failure. It is only by losing himself completely in some kind of artistic or intellectual contemplation or creativity that man can find, not himself, but the Idea which transcends the individual, his will-to-live, and its objects, the phenomena.³⁵ Now Glazzard is as incapable of this as Alma Frothingham will prove to be. He turns from one "topographical note" to another. His notion of marrying a (to him) unattractive girl for her fortune is, at bottom, as unmotivated as his "decision" to enter politics. He is merely

groping his way and catching at chance expedients as the following passage makes clear:

Glazzard's self-contempt as he went home this evening was not unmingled with pleasanter thoughts. For a man in his position, Serena Mumbray and her thousands did not represent a future of despair. He had always aimed much higher, but defeat after defeat left him with shaken nerves, and gloomy dialogues with his brother had impressed upon him the necessity of guarding against darkest possibilities. His state of mind was singularly morbid; he could not trust the fixity of his purposes for more than a day or two together; but just at present he thought without distaste of Serena herself, and was soothed by the contemplation of her (to him modest) fortune (p. 124).

For Serena is no more than a last resort. This state of mind will be expressed still more

explicitly later on when Glazzard, becoming jealous of Denzil, analyses his feelings: “True that he himself had caught eagerly at the hope of entering Parliament; but it was the impulse of a man who knew his life to be falling into ruin, who welcomed any suggestion that would save him from final and fatal apathy” (p. 154). “The ceaseless efforts to banish suffering,” says Schopenhauer, “accomplish no more than to make it change its form [...] If we succeed [...] in removing pain in this form, it immediately assumes a thousand others, varying according to age and circumstances, such as lust, passionate love, jealousy, envy, hatred, anxiety, ambition, covetousness, sickness, &c., &c. If at last it can find entrance in no other form, it comes in the sad, grey garments of tediousness and ennui, against which we then strive in various ways” (*ibid.*, Bk. IV, § 57, p. 406).

This state of mind may lead to unmotivated “wickedness,” he concludes, and the conversation between Serena and Glazzard about the train-wrecking is an illustration of this:

“What frightful wickedness! she exclaimed. “What motive can there have been, do you think?”

“Probably none, in the sense you mean.”

“Yes – such a man must be mad.”

“I don’t think that,” said Glazzard, meditatively. “I can understand his doing it with no reason at all but the wish to see what would happen. [...]”

“You can *understand* that?”

“Very well indeed,” he answered, in the same half-absent way. “Power of all kinds is a temptation to men. A certain kind of man – not necessarily cruel – would be fascinated with the thought of bringing about such a terrific end by such slight means” (p. 156).

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This is an excellent piece of Schopenhauerian psychology. Glazzard himself is “fascinated” by the tragedy; he repudiates the plausible motives of madness and cruelty because he feels personally implicated in the matter. He thus evokes the desire for power, which could constitute a motivation. But this hypothesis is somewhat contradicted by his two remarks: “no reason at all but the wish to see what would happen” and “the thought of bringing about such a terrific end by such slight means.” In fact this “desire for power,” if it exists, in Glazzard’s case has nothing to do with positive action, just as his ambition to “be” in Parliament has nothing to do with political ends. It is simply another manifestation of his need to assert the fact of his own existence, merely one more avatar of the will-to-live without object, which may lead, in Schopenhauer’s words, not only to “positive wickedness,” but even to murder (*ibid.*, § 58, p. 413, § 62).

If Glazzard has not yet contemplated active wickedness, these reflections on the train-wrecking are a foreshadowing of the wanton destruction he will wreak on Denzil’s career and life. For if indeed he had come to hate Quarrier, it was “with no vulgar hatred; not with the vengeful rancour which would find delight in annihilating its object.” A certain admiration for Denzil is mingled with “mortified vanity” after his friend has ridiculed his Parliamentary pretensions and his intended marriage. “[Y]et he did not wish for his final unhappiness – only for a temporary pulling-down, a wholesome castigation of over-blown pride” (p. 198), and he is half-inclined to act upon Denzil’s advice and go to live in the South, an idea “that his fancy had often played with” (pp. 198-99).

At this stage, however, the reader has undoubtedly realised that Glazzard is incapable of spontaneously initiating any kind of action whatsoever. He is, himself, perfectly conscious of this. When the letter from the agents identifying Northway arrives, and thus the possibility of ruining Denzil’s career, he plays with the idea, but “long before this he had grown careless

whether they succeeded or not. An impulse of curiosity, nothing more [...] a fondness for playing with secrets, a disposition to get power into his hands – excited to activity just after a long pleasant talk with Lilian. He was sorry this letter had come [...]" (p. 203). One wonders if Glazzard is here, for once, "excited to activity," not simply a prey to the "stimulus" Schopenhauer analyses in plants, animals, and the human body (*World*, Bk. II, § 23 and Vol. III, ch. XXVII of Supplements to Book II), and which he says differs only in degree from human motivation. Glazzard is incapable of taking a motivated decision as described by the

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philosopher: "Resolutions of the will which relate to the future are merely deliberations of the reason about what we shall will at a particular time, not real acts of will. Only the carrying out of the resolve stamps it as will [...]" (*ibid.*, Bk. II, § 18, p. 130). But now the possibility presents itself of "know[ing] the joy of vigorous action," "of asserting himself to some notable result," for "in his hand were strings, which, if he liked to pull them, would topple down a goodly edifice, with uproar and dust and amazement indescribable; so slight an effort, so incommensurable an outcome!" (p. 203). In effect, the activity exercised by Glazzard would be, in this case, as in others, minimal. To "assert himself" thus would merely be a matter of "pulling strings," and the effect produced disproportionate to the "stimulus" producing it, defined by Schopenhauer as "such a cause as sustains no reaction proportional to its effect, and the intensity of which does not vary directly in proportion to the intensity of its effect, so that the effect cannot be measured by it" (*ibid.*, § 21, p. 149), and it is in this context that Coustillas' remark on the sufficiency of "a rap on the knuckles" becomes significant, the effect of Glazzard's irritation being indeed out of all proportion to the cause. (We may also remark here that Schopenhauer speaks of men as "puppets" [*World*, vol. III, ch. XXVIII, p. 116]). But once again, his desires and projects remain at the incipient stage: "it was only an amusing dream" (p. 204).

Finally, the proof that Glazzard's will-to-live coexists with a fundamental inaptitude for corresponding action is amply illustrated by his creator in the passages concerning the fatal stay in Bristol. He wanders aimlessly about the town, unable to concentrate on "the purpose that had brought him hither," and the next morning wakes up in his hotel wondering "where he could be," "why on earth he had come here," and envisaging a return to Polterham. However, after breakfast he inquires the way to Hotwells and the information given supplies him with another "motive" for staying in Bristol: Hotwells was near Clifton and "Clifton was a place to be seen," and "on a bright morning like this it would be pleasant to walk over the Downs and have a look at the gorge of the Avon" (pp. 205-06).

He consequently calls a cab, but when it arrives remains "in uncertainty" "with one foot raised"; the driver has to ask him twice which way to go. "At length" he names a street in Hotwells, but inertia once more asserting itself, he "lay back and closed his eyes, remaining thus until the cab stopped" (p. 206).

Even the final "decision" owes everything to chance: it depends on a spin of the coin he is going to give the cabman (p. 206). The fatal spin commits Glazzard to a course of action which,

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he will find, no longer "greatly interested him" (p. 210). Man, says Schopenhauer, "has a *choice*, which only makes him the scene of the conflict of his motives, without withdrawing him from their control" (*ibid.*, Bk. IV, § 55, p. 388, author's italics). "Thus [...] life swings like a pendulum backwards and forwards between pain and ennui" (*ibid.*, § 57, p. 402). But in spite of this possibility of choice, real freewill, he says *passim*, is illusory, for a man will always act *in character*. What he believes to be decisions are only phenomena, the manifestations of this

character at certain times, in certain places, in certain circumstances.

Glazzard's character has been revealing itself throughout the book, and will continue to do so to the end; his instability combined with his incapacity for effective action and decision-taking, his dissatisfaction with the artistic life, and above all his will to live which cannot find its object, precisely by reason of these particularities. For even at this juncture, after his conversations with Northway, he begins to have doubts about this, the only decisive action he has initiated: "He felt a miserable sinking of the heart, a weariness as if after great exertion," and becomes so absorbed in the scene at the railway station that "he forgot all else" (p. 243).

Again, it is a chance encounter with a drunken partisan of Denzil's, who insults him and shouts "Quarrier for ever!" which turns the scale. The shot has gone home, and henceforth he looks forward to "the pleasure of imagining all that he left behind him [...] He had always sympathized with Guy Fawkes and his fellow-conspirators: how delightful to have fired the train, and then, at a safe distance, have awaited the stupendous explosion" (pp. 245-46).

What has happened to Glazzard is exactly what Schopenhauer describes in Book IV, § 57 ff.: when a man's will to live has no object, and he becomes a victim of suffering and ennui, it is then that "the sight or the description of the sufferings of others affords us satisfaction and pleasure." And quoting Lucretius, he proceeds to show how this passive satisfaction "lies very near the source of real, positive wickedness" (*ibid.*, § 58, pp. 412-13), "actual wickedness, which seeks, quite disinterestedly, the hurt and suffering of others, without any advantage to itself" (*ibid.*, § 61, p. 429).

But, Schopenhauer remarks, even the most wicked man will feel some remorse, and Glazzard is not immune to this. At the railway-station, the whistle of the train appears to him like "a voice lamenting to the dead of night" (p. 243), and later he will reflect on Lilian's plight, which "was the only troublesome thought." This is "*the sting of conscience*" described by the

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philosopher, the suffering felt by the executioner who is also the victim of his actions (*ibid.*, § 65, p. 471), and which "he himself tries to conceal" (*ibid.*, p. 472) – in Glazzard's case, by imagining that "perhaps he was doing her the greatest kindness in his power" (p. 246).

After Glazzard's departure with Serena the train of events will lead to the inevitable catastrophe finally provoked by Mrs. Wade, who also appears to incarnate this principle of "positive wickedness," not having much to gain by her action – or inaction. During the Glazzards' stay in Italy, Eustace becomes obsessed by the idea of making a portrait of Judas Iscariot, in which, as usual, he is unsuccessful. However, he returns to the idea in England and finally models the head in clay. The result is deemed "wonderful" but "horrible" by Serena, whose only consolation is that of seeing her husband at last create something, and "very good" by Denzil, although it makes him feel "uncomfortable."

But Glazzard's conscience is troubling him, and he can find no pleasure in the only action he has committed and the only work of art he has ever completed. "Let me not see what manner of man I am," says Schopenhauer (*ibid.*, § 65, p. 474), for when we come to know ourselves, "we are often terrified at ourselves" (*ibid.*, § 55, p. 382). Denzil's first comment is a masterpiece of dramatic irony: "Our friend Judas [...] finished at last?" (p. 332), for Glazzard is at once Judas and Denzil's supposed "friend," and both Judas and Glazzard are "finished" in every sense of the term: Glazzard, unable to appreciate his own creation, for he is indeed contemplating "what manner of man" he is, destroys it, and Northway, in his turn, will destroy Glazzard.

"I can't tell you why I did it. I'm not sure that I quite understand now. I did it, and there's no more to be said," he replies to Denzil's question (p. 341). It is also the only answer to the questions which critics have asked concerning Glazzard's motivation.

There are other Schopenhauerian elements to be recognised in *Denzil Quarrier*. Several themes, such as that of social law and the right to lie, the problem of suicide and the evil character of Mrs. Wade as already suggested, bear the Schopenhauerian stamp. All this could be dealt with in a full-length study. But I selected Eustace Glazzard for special consideration because he is a veritable incarnation of Schopenhauerian ideas, all in one person, coherent to the end, absolutely “in character.” And also because this creation, a living, convincing, “painfully

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human” dramatization of abstractions is, as such, “in character,” and consequently “typical Gissing.”

[Where reviews quoted figure in Coustillas and Partridge, *Gissing: The Critical Heritage* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972; rptd 1985), I have added: *CH* and page number.]

¹See his *Paradox of Gissing* (Hemel Hempstead: Allen & Unwin, 1986), p. 3.

²In *George Gissing: Essays and Fiction*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), pp. 23-25.

³In *Collected Articles on George Gissing*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1968), p. 115.

⁴*London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978), p. 374.

⁵For this novel, page numbers in parentheses refer to the AMS reprint (1969) of the original edition.

⁶John Halperin, *Gissing, A Life in Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 170.

⁷Jacob Korg, *Gissing, A Critical Biography* (1963) (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), pp. 180-82.

⁸9 April 1892, p. 347 (cf. Coustillas, *op. cit.*, 1970, p. 31, note).

⁹*New York Daily Tribune*, 27 March 1892, p. 18 (cf. Coustillas, *ibid. loc. cit.*).

¹⁰Unsigned review, 12 March 1892, p. 5 (*CH*, p. 194).

¹¹The problem of variable criteria is discussed at length in Coustillas and Partridge, *op. cit.*, Introduction.

¹²Unsigned review, 30 June 1905, p. 209 (*CH*, p. 481).

¹³R. C. Churchill, “Three Autobiographical Novelists,” in *The Pelican Guide to English Literature*, 1969, p. 341.

¹⁴Halperin, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 168.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 169.

¹⁷Harold Frederic, *New York Times*, 8 December 1895, p. 16 (*CH*, p. 258).

¹⁸*Times Literary Supplement*, 28 December 1956, p. 780 (cf. Coustillas 1968, p. 63).

¹⁹*Manchester Quarterly*, April 1905, pp. 106-123 (*CH*, pp. 467-78, p. 474).

²⁰Which may also account for Jacob Korg’s somewhat incomprehensible remark: “on the whole a pleasing book,” *op. cit.*, p. 180.

²¹Unsigned review, *Guardian*, 23 March 1892, xlvii (i), 439 (*CH*, p. 195).

²²*Gissing Newsletter*, vol. XIX, no. 3, July 1983, pp. 1-16.

²³Korg, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

²⁴Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

²⁵*The Whirlpool* (1897) (London: Hogarth Press, 1984), p. 270.

²⁶*Gissing Newsletter*, vol. XVII, no. 4, October 1981, pp. 1-21, p. 13.

²⁷Coustillas, 1970, *op. cit.*, p. 31, note.

²⁸Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

²⁹*The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, ed. Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press), vol. V (1994), p. 22.

³⁰Coustillas, 1970, *op. cit.*, p. 31, note.

³¹Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, translated by R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp, 3 vols., Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Fourth ed. of the original translation (1883-1886), 1896. All quotations are to be found, unless otherwise specified, in vol. I of this translation, hereafter referred to as *World*. It is pointed out by Coustillas (1970, *op. cit.*, p. 17) that Gissing first read Schopenhauer in German before 1883. However, if, later, he had had, by chance, to resort to the English translation, this is the text he would have referred to; and even if this was not the case, this translation is an indication of the way an English reader would have understood the text at the time. Consequently I have had no reason to enter into the recent debates concerning terminology.

³²*Letters*, vol. II (1991), p. 146.

³³P. Coustillas and P. Bridgwater, *George Gissing at Work: A Study of His Notebook "Extracts from My Reading"* (Greensboro, N. C.: ELT Press, 1988), p. 117.

³⁴It would appear that Schopenhauer somewhat contradicts himself here, as in other cases. In one paragraph he says that will-as-such is completely different (*toto genere*) from acts of will; in another he says that this is only a matter of degree, not of essence. But this is not material to our argument.

³⁵Although Schopenhauer's theories have mostly been quoted in reference to "contemplation" and to the fine arts and to music, they also concern creativity, not only artistic but intellectual, especially in philosophy, literature, history and science (*vide World*, vol. III, Supplement to Bk. III) and cf. C. J. Francis, *op. cit.*, and Grylls, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-17, 70-71, 196, n. 49.

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Gissing's Worldly Parable: "The Foolish Virgin"

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Twenty-five years ago, Gillian Tindall chose Gissing's "The Foolish Virgin" as "the best short story he ever wrote," and she stressed, with much cogency, its "sympathetic insight into the female situation" at the end of the nineteenth century.¹ But the story stands apart as well for its wryly unreligious use of a Gospel parable – that of the "wise" and "foolish" virgins (Matthew 25: 1-13). A thorough knowledge of that parable enhances our reading of Gissing's pungent tale, even though he always rejected Christianity. That well-known rejection may very

well explain why no one has explored the links between Gissing's "Foolish Virgin" and the parable from Matthew.

From his earliest days when his free-thinking father had taught him to scorn his mother's low-church Anglicanism until his death, Gissing remained essentially opposed to religion.² For example, on 15 September 1883, he wrote to his pious sister Margaret to express his own utter

disbelief in her self-consoling Christian faith:

In very deed, I can prove, absolutely, nothing whatever. I am surrounded by infinite darkness, & live my little life by the light of such poor tapers as the sun, moon, & stars. [...] If you tell me you believe that the light has been brought to you, by means of a certain revelation, I cannot possibly say you are wrong. I could only do so if my own senses were final arbiters of truth. All I can say is that I am so constituted that I *cannot* put faith in the light you hold to me; it appears to me an artificial reflection of man's hopes.³

Yet even though Gissing rejected Christianity, he knew its texts quite well. In the very same year that he composed "The Foolish Virgin," he wrote surprisingly to his friend Clara Collet that "my ideal of literature is getting to be the Bible, with its continuous solemnity of tone. It is conceivable that in another year or two I shall read little, by choice, but the Bible & Milton" (24 February 1895, *Letters*, V, 301). Note, though, that Gissing regards the Bible as just another literary text, even though a great one. Within "The Foolish Virgin" itself, he uses the allusion to the parable from Matthew for an antireligious and essentially ironic purpose.

Jesus' parable teaches the need to remain fully prepared for the coming of "the Son of man." The parable uses the polygamous simile of ten brides' readiness or their unreadiness for the approach of a bridegroom whom they expect to share. Each virgin has a lamp to light his way, and the wise ones fill their lamps with oil, but the foolish ones neglect to do so. When the bridegroom is about to arrive, the five foolish virgins rush out to buy oil. When they return, he has gone in already to the five wise virgins but refuses to let the foolish ones back inside.

Even though Tindall argues that the title "The Foolish Virgin" "is to be taken in its most obvious meaning rather than in its strictly biblical one,"⁴ the allusion to the parable illuminates the story in a most sardonic way. From the start, the narrator stresses his heroine's devoutness. Rosamund Jewell has covered her walls not only with "illuminated texts of Scripture" but also

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"portraits of admired clergymen." She draws "support from" her "religion," prays at difficult moments, discusses her soul's welfare with the man who most attracts her, and sometimes in her devotion even feels "the solace of an infinite self-glorification."⁵ Yet, in spite of all appearances, she does not really pray for the heavenly bridegroom to bring her soul at last to eternal bliss. As an unmarried woman without sufficient income or occupational skills to rise above mere rooming-house squalor, what she really wants from God is a friendly husband to save her discomforted flesh from poverty (191).

She tries various tactics to attract an earthly bridegroom. At times she assumes the manners but not the substance of the decade's "new" and emancipated women: "masculine habits," "loud slang," "male" dress, and expressed "scorn" for the "domestic" feminine "virtues" (192). Yet she actually imitates women from her rooming-house life who themselves imitate feminine liberation with the exclusive intent of catching a man drawn to that sort of behavior. More often, though, Rosamund uses a completely opposite strategy with men: one of taking on the manners of an old-fashioned woman: "She would talk with babbling naïveté, exaggerate the languor induced by idleness, lack of exercise, and consequent ill-health; betray timidities and pruderies, let fall a pious phrase, rise of a morning for 'early celebration' and let the fact be known" (192). But this too amounts to hardly more than mimicry, for she lacks the skills and the basic disposition for becoming a traditional housewife and mother (205, 207). Yet, in any case, however she acts, the earthly bridegroom does not come.

An ironic twist emerges from Gissing's worldly use of the parable. Rosamund Jewell's most disastrous mistake lies not in her unpreparedness for an earthly bridegroom, but instead

her total unpreparedness for his failure ever to come. In the opening pages, this worn-looking woman of twenty-nine, who was once “rather pretty” (194), has learned that the suitor whom she had resolved to settle for at last – the less-than-dashing Cheeseman with the unpoetic name – has become, in fact, engaged to an unnamed young widow without telling Rosamund.⁶ In lonely despair she visits friends named Hunt at Teddington – the outermost edge of southwest London. There she runs into the young Miss Hunt’s brother Geoffrey, an eligible lumber dealer towards whom Miss Jewell used to feel a “romantic passion” that he himself never returned. When she babbles on to him about her soulful ideals, he mentions a friend named Halliday who also had ideals but has ended up so poor that his admirable wife has to slave, in effect, as his full-time housemaid, on barely enough to provide for the family. Because Rosamund hopes that

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Geoffrey may be testing her own worthiness to become his wife, she at last confesses her poverty, and pleads with him to recommend her as a live-in maid for Mrs. Halliday. Miss Jewell’s delayed attempt to reform her lazy and also pointless way of life corresponds, on a purely worldly level, to the last-minute effort by the five foolish virgins to buy lamp oil for the bridegroom.

After Rosamund submits to the humbling role of housemaid for almost a year, she learns, with an unjustified wrath, that Hunt, who has never encouraged her romantically, has become engaged to someone else. Then Rosamund briefly involves herself again with the still single Cheeseman. This time he actually proposes to her, but he soon runs off to marry the young widow in order to avoid a suit for breach of promise. Because Rosamund has kept on waiting for an earthly bridegroom who has simply failed to come, she finds herself without any means of support except a return to her lowly job as Mrs. Halliday’s servant. In the end, Rosamund Jewell remains shut out from the world of giving and taking in marriage, like the five foolish virgins in the parable.

The sexual implication of “virgin” itself within Gissing’s story also plays out ironically in contrast to an underlying assumption of the parable from Matthew. This takes for granted that, even though the unwise future brides may not have filled their lamps or prepared themselves in spirit, they have still remained virgins for the expected heavenly bridegroom. Yet Rosamund Jewell has kept herself chaste for an earthly one who never does appear. Gissing hints at her resistance to sexual temptations, even though that resistance will remain unrewarded:

She was not of the base order of women. Conscience yet lived in her, and drew support from religion; something of modesty, of self respect, still clad her starving soul. Ignorance and ill-luck had once or twice thrown her into such society as may be found in establishments outwardly respectable; she trembled and fled. (191)

Cheeseman’s second desertion, however, leaves Rosamund so bitter that she almost throws away what a passage refers to only euphemistically as “social respectability”:

The three months that followed were a time of graver peril, of darker crises, than Rosamund, with all her slip-slop experiences, had ever known. An observer adequately supplied with facts, psychological and material, would more than once have felt that it depended on the mere toss of a coin whether she kept or lost her social respectability. She sounded all the depths

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possible to such a mind and heart – save only that from which there could have been no redemption. A saving memory lived within her... (215)

These words may even suggest the most extreme temptation: the unthinkable choice of prostitution, a possible variation on a theme used in Gissing's earliest novels – *Workers in the Dawn* (1880) and *The Unclassed* (1884) – and drawn, of course, from his own pathetic failure to redeem Nell Harrison from her life as a prostitute by a formal marriage.⁷ On the other hand, the passage may simply suggest how near the embittered Rosamund has come to discarding away her long-preserved virginity. In any case, the “saving memory” (a secularized form here of religious grace) of Rosamund's job as housemaid does keep her from the streets or from sexual disaster, but it only just keeps her from them. She has come so close to choosing another way that the narrator describes her decision by the figure of a coin toss. At any rate, as a result of three months of experience that she cannot and will not even talk about, “the foolish virgin” or the foolish ex-virgin crawls humbly back to her housemaid's job of helping Mrs. Halliday (216).

We should note one basic and concluding irony. Not all the “illuminated texts of Scripture,” all the prayers, all the ascetic acts and even all the spiritual “self-glorification” that Rosamund Jewell resorts to could have rescued her from sexual temptations (190, 193, 207). Only the job of housemaid saves her. If menial women's labor remains in itself an implausible kind of salvation, no other one remains open on earth to this unskilled woman who has never found a husband. The symbolic task of filling the lamps in Jesus' own parable becomes literalized by Gissing into actual housework – “lighting fires” and “sweeping floors” (216). This may not win Rosamund a heavenly bridegroom or even a mere earthly one, but her humble labor does allow her to put her shattered existence into some kind of order. In this difficult world of late-Victorian spinsters, a miserable salary of ten pounds a year, along with at least a “tiny” room to sleep in (204-05), counts a great deal more than religion's purely transcendental credit.

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¹Gillian Tindall, *The Born Exile: George Gissing* (London: Temple Smith, 1974), p. 200.

²For the antireligious influence of Gissing's father, see “Reminiscences [sic] of my Father jotted down from time to time as they by chance occur to me,” notebook, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

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³*The Collected Letters of George Gissing*, ed. Paul F. Mattheisen, A. C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1990-1997) (hereafter referred to in the text as *Letters*), II, p. 158.

⁴Tindall, p. 228.

⁵George Gissing, “The Foolish Virgin,” *A Victim of Circumstances* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1927), 190-91, 193, 197, 202, 207; hereafter page numbers in brackets in the text refer to this edition; first published in *The Yellow Book*, vol. 8 (January 1896), pp. 11-38. He started “The Foolish Virgin” on 18 October 1895, abandoned it on 21 October, returned to it on 30 October, and completed it on 4 November. For these dates, see *London and the Life of Literature in Late Victorian England: The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 1978), pp. 391-93.

⁶*Cheeseman* illustrates Gissing's old habit of recycling fictional names. This particular one ultimately derives from the ridiculous curate, Cheeseman, in “My Clerical Rival” (written

between November 1879 and July 1880; not published until 1970 in *My First Rehearsal and My Clerical Rival* [London: Enitharmon Press]). He, in turn, handed on his name to an equally ridiculous Cheeseman in *A Life's Morning* (written from late August to early November 1885 [*Letters*, II, pp. 341 and 346]); published in 1888 (London: Smith, Elder). In "The Foolish Virgin" of 1896, the namesake of Gissing's two previous Cheesemans acts every bit as doltishly as they do.

⁷For my interpretation of Gissing's relationship with Nell Harrison, see Robert L. Selig, *George Gissing*, 2nd ed., Twayne's English Authors Series 346 (New York: Twayne Publishers/Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1995), pp. 3-5, 8-9.

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Gissing and London's Music Halls

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Gissing experienced loneliness and frustration in the late 1880s. The vibrant atmosphere of London's music halls, then enjoying their golden age, must have provided a welcome, if short-lived, palliative.

The legitimate theatre presented a somewhat different picture. Here, the quality of play and performance were of paramount importance and too often produced disappointment, even anger. A nice example is to be found in Terry's Theatre in the Strand, opened in 1887. The first big success was Pinero's *Sweet Lavender*, produced on 21 March 1888. A simple, romantic, one-set play, it ran for 684 performances and was said to have made a profit of £20,000 for

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Terry, and to have cost £66 to produce, with a top salary of £17 per week.¹ At a time when the rumbles of Ibsenism were crossing the North Sea, the hand of Clement Scott was suspected in the unsigned criticism in the *Theatre*, of May 1888, which said:

What an admirable retort witty Pinero is giving to the disciples of Zola and "naturalism," who think a play cannot be healthy without being insipid. In *Sweet Lavender* the dramatist introduces us to good women and honest men, and withal the play is as brilliant as a flash of light. The pure sentiment which brings tears to our eyes is well spiced with refined wit, quaint and even grotesque humour in which nothing has been sacrificed to vulgarity to create laughter. But we do laugh, merrily and heartily, whilst wiping our eyes, and we are ashamed of neither, for this outward show of diverse feelings is only the just tribute to the author, who has written one of the best plays we have seen for a long time.

Gissing attended on Saturday, 16 June. His diary entry is short and to the point:

I went off to Terry's Theatre and saw Pinero's "Sweet Lavender," getting a place in the pit, when I had meant to go to the gallery, and so spending 2/6 when even 1/- would have been extravagance. Ye gods, what a play! Sentimental farce; conventionality gone mad; acting the feeblest I ever witnessed, excepting Terry's extravagant part.²

Another Pinero disaster the following year. This time at the Garrick. The diary entry for Tuesday, April 30 reads:

I went to the theatre, the new Garrick, in Charing Cross Road, opened the other day, and saw Pinero's "The Profligate." I think I never sat through such feeble twaddle, or saw poorer acting. Was ashamed of myself for being present.³

Pinero was not alone. On 16 April we read:

In the evening dined with Roberts in Soho, and then we went to the Shaftesbury to see "The Middleman" [by Henry Arthur Jones]. Bad play and bad acting, detestable conventionality of structure and dialogue.⁴

Contrast these doleful reports with the music hall entry on 4 July 1888:

At 3 o'clock to Miss Agabeg's concert at Steinway Hall. Two hours and a half of mortal ennui. [...] On returning of course unable to work. [...] went to the Royal Music Hall, as a needful relief.⁵

Gissing's grumbles were not restricted to the legitimate theatre. The weather, minor ailments, property developers, advertisements, railway stations, all received their share of complaints, but

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rarely the music hall which seemed to be an exception and provide a needful relief to life's woes. No doubt the most significant visit to a music hall took place on Wednesday, 24 September 1890, when Gissing set out from 7K to walk along Oxford Street to the Oxford Music Hall, unaware that this visit would change his life. The legendary Dan Leno was appearing in the halls at this time, together with Chirgwin, the White-Eyed Kaffir, Ventriloquists, Equilibrists, Illusionists, male and female impersonators, knockabout comedians and specialist acts of all kinds, but it was chiefly the Comic Singers who represented the spirit of the music hall. They raced from hall to hall each night under the intensive turns system. Some were good, some were not so good.

The Oxford had suffered a second major fire in 1872. Phoenix-like, the third Oxford rose from the ashes and was opened on 17 March 1873. The *Era* theatrical paper reported that among the changes and improvements might be mentioned a splendid promenade in place of the boxes, at the back of the balcony, making a most agreeable lounge for those who prefer freedom of action and wish to gossip with their friends between the pauses of entertainment. They confirmed that from this spot the best view of the stage could be obtained and the appearance of the hall was quite dazzling. Gissing was probably among those who preferred freedom of action. Perhaps this is where he met Edith Underwood that night. Edith was a "respectable" girl, aged twenty-three, who lived with her parents in Camden Town. On the other hand, if we are to believe Roberts, Gissing met Edith by rushing out into Baker Street and speaking to the first woman he saw. Perhaps he then escorted her to the Oxford on 24 September. The diary entry does not help: "Day of extreme misery. Wrote nothing. In evening to the Oxford. – E.U."⁶ In either case, the tragic result would have been the same. Within a week there was a trip to Richmond with tea at Kew. Evenings were frequently spent with Edith at 7K. Five months later they were married and Gissing was soon to learn that all visits to the music hall did not necessarily provide long-term needful relief.

Yet, despite this outcome and a deteriorating domestic situation Gissing still attended the

music hall and used it with apparent approval in many of his writings. On 4 April 1893, less than three years after the fateful night at the Oxford, the diary reads:

Evening to the Pavilion chiefly to hear Albert Chevalier in his coster songs.
A note of comedy in him much superior to the run of hall people.⁷

Chevalier had the distinction of being the only music hall artist to be mentioned by name in Gissing's diary. He had converted from the straight theatre to the music hall in 1891, and was an

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The Oxford Music Hall in The 1890s
(Courtesy of the City of Westminster Archives Centre)
Note the pavement placard advertising DAN LENO on the right hand side

immediate sensation, employing his acting skill to create the tradition of the “pearly coster,” which still lingers to this day. His best known sentimental number, “My old Dutch,” contrasted with his rowdy “Wot Cher! or Knock’d ’Em in the Old Kent Road,” sung with boisterous audience participation.

Gissing was then writing a series of short stories for Clement Shorter, editor of the *English Illustrated Magazine*. One of them, “Lou and Liz,” was published in August, 1893. It records how Lou and Liz starved themselves occasionally, so that they could afford to enjoy the delights of the Canterbury Theatre of Varieties in Westminster Bridge Road and the Royal Surrey in Blackfriars Road. Top of the music hall pops at the time was “The Man who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo,” sung by Charles Coborn, a leading comic singer who had purchased the singing rights for one guinea. It was inspired by the exploits of the gambler, Charles de Ville Wells,⁸ who indeed broke the bank. It remains firmly entrenched in the nation’s popular sub-culture to the present day.

As I walk along the Bois Boulong
With an independent air,
You can hear the girls declare,
‘He must be a millionaire’;
You can hear them sigh and wish to die,
You can see them wink the other eye
At the man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo.

The Christmas number of the same magazine that year contained Gissing’s little known story “The Muse of the Halls.” It does not appear in any of the short story collections and is certainly very difficult to track down and obtain. The writer is indebted to the editor of this *Journal* for bringing it to his attention. The story covers all aspects of the music hall from the artistes and their agents to the managers, owners, music publishers and, of course, the audience. It centres on Hilda Page, an ill-paid concert singer, who was becoming sick of half-hearted applause and insincere encouragement. She was being tempted by a music hall talent scout to the horror of her respectable mother and Denis Bryant, to whom she was engaged. In spite of this opposition, she seized an opportunity to appear at a small South London music hall and achieved a moderate success. Meanwhile, Denis continued to work on a Cantata he was composing until, under the influence of poverty and his friend, Williamson, he turned his

musical talents from the Concert Hall to the Music Hall. Together, the two friends produced, to their great delight, “My Peter,” which they immediately sang with great gusto.

We’ve a nice little home at Stamford Hill,
With plenty of room for three.
My Peter’s screw is two pound two,
And he brings it all to me.
He never gets jealous
Of all the fellows
That talk of his blooming Rose.
I’m awful sweet
On dear old Pete,
And I don’t care a button who knows.

In the story, the song is taken up by a rising star and finds its way to the more prestigious halls, such as the Canterbury and the Pavilion. After Denis has agreed that Hilda had not entirely failed on the halls, she retired with dignity and married Denis on the proceeds of his newly-found fame. She declared that: "We have starved long enough in devotion to Art; now I am going to aim at filthy lucre." No strictures on commercialism here like those in *New Grub Street*: Gissing does not condemn it where the music hall is concerned. Where else throughout his works do we find him writing such undiluted fun as "My Peter"?

A diary entry on 26 September 1893 records completion of "The Muse of the Halls" in the morning. In the afternoon Gissing left the manuscript at the *Illustrated London News* office, and then went to the British Museum, where he read John Davidson's first collection of poems, *In a Music Hall*. He does not comment on the work, which apparently had very bad reviews and, consequently, very poor sales. This, no doubt, would account for the fact that the writer of this article has failed in his efforts to find a copy to-day.

Four years later, in *The Town Traveller*, Gissing painted a graphic, but still not unsympathetic picture of a London music hall, when Gammon, the leading male character, arranged to meet Polly Sparkes after her duties as a programme seller at a legitimate theatre. To pass the time he dropped into a music hall:

A damsel, sparingly clad, was singing in the serio-comic vein, with a dance after each stanza. As he sipped his whisky, and watched and listened, Gammon felt his heart glow within him. The melody was lulling; it had a

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refrain of delicious sentiment. The listener's eyes grew moist; there rose a lump in his throat. [...] When the singer withdrew he clapped violently, and thereupon called for another Scotch hot, with lemon. [...] So he drank and applauded, and piped his eye and drank again, till it was time to meet Polly. When he went forth into the cold street never was man more softly amorous, more mirthfully exultant, more kindly disposed to all the dwellers upon earth. Life abounds in such forms of happiness, yet we are told that it is a sad and sorry affair.⁹

The story line then required an end to this euphoria and Gissing boldly used a new slant on the music hall to achieve this objective, still without voicing any criticism of the institution:

With clang and twang the orchestra (a music-hall orchestra) summoned to hilarity an audience of the first half-hour; stragglers at various prices, but all alike in their manifest subdual by a cold atmosphere, a dull illumination, empty seats, and inferior singers put on for the early "turns." A striking of matches to kindle pipe or cigar, a thudding of heavy boots, clink of glass or pewter, and a waiter's spiritless refrain—"Any orders, gents?" Things would be better presently. In the meantime Mr. Gammon was content to have found a place where he could talk with Polly, sheltered from the January night, at small expense.¹⁰

Thus, Gissing was able to use his detailed knowledge and keen appreciation of the world of the music hall to support the intricacies of his plots. His final encounter with the London music hall scene came somewhat unexpectedly. He was dining at the White Hart in Lewes on 5 May 1899, waiting for Gabrielle to send for him from Rouen for the "marriage ceremony." To

his surprise, William Rothenstein entered the dining room with a friend who proved to be Walter Sickert. Rothenstein had made drawings of Gissing two years earlier. Sickert's fame came from his extensive portrayal of the London music hall scene. Both he and Gissing were enthusiasts for the sub-culture and they no doubt talked well into the night. In fact, both had been suspects during the mass hysteria provoked by the Jack the Ripper atrocities a few years earlier¹¹ – but that is another story.

¹Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, *The Lost Theatres of London* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968), p. 514.

²*The Diary of George Gissing, Novelist*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978), p. 32.

³*Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁵*Ibid.*, p.35.

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⁶*Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 301.

⁸Charles de Ville Wells was confused in Folkestone with H. G. Wells. See "The Spade House that Gissing Knew," *Gissing Journal*, April 1999, p. 32.

⁹*The Town Traveller* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981), pp. 205-06.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 298.

¹¹Donald McCormack, *The Identity of Jack the Ripper*, 1970.

* * *

On the Latin of Gissing's Henry Ryecroft

MATTHEW LEIGH
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The 1987 Oxford World's Classics edition of George Gissing's *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, ed. M. Storey, elucidates many of the classical allusions of Gissing's scholar manqué. In two places, however, it is possible to correct or to add to the notes provided.

(i) p. 16: Ryecroft recalls his life of poverty in London and states that "Nobody knows better than I do *quam parvo liceat producere vitam.*" Storey states that "the source of this quotation remains elusive." It is taken from Lucan *Pharsalia* 4.377 and is part of a passage in which Caesar finally permits the parched soldiers of Afranius and Petreius to drink the water of the river from which he has previously barred them. When Caesar not only grants these defeated Pompeians his clemency but also allows them complete dismissal from military service, *Pharsalia* 4.382-401 hymns the very life of disengagement and simplicity which Ryecroft has learned to treasure.

(ii) p. 84: Ryecroft celebrates the second Jubilee and notes the popularity of the monarchy with the English people. He observes that "The majority thinking thus, and the system being found to work more than tolerably well, what purpose could be served by an attempt at *novas res?*" The bald translation of the Latin phrase as "new things" understates the reactionary sentiments so often mingling with Ryecroft's quietism. For the general sense of *novae res* in Latin is that of "revolution," for instance at Cicero *In Catilinam* 1.1.3, where the consul celebrates the archaic precedent whereby *Q. Servilius Ahala Sp. Maelium novis rebus studentem manu sua occidit*. For this sense of the phrase, see also Livy 23.2.3, 23.14.7, 23.15.9, 24.1.7.

Book Reviews

Marysa Demoor, *Their Fair Share: Women, Power and Criticism in the Athenæum, from Millicent Garrett Fawcett to Katherine Mansfield, 1870-1920*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000.

This is a book which will be read with some curiosity by anyone who is aware of Gissing's oft-expressed hostility to the main weekly literary journal published in England in his lifetime. The *Athenæum* was the only one that reviewed all his books from *Workers in the Dawn* to *The House of Cobwebs*; he subscribed to it for a time early in his career and again late in life, not because of any unavowed esteem for it, but because it offered the most comprehensive coverage of current English literature and, after he left England for good, helped him to keep abreast of literary life in his native country. He would read its closely printed pages with a keen eye for any form of attractive novelty, for the new volumes published by his contemporaries, and for the occasional comment on his own work, but he also immersed himself in its abundant reading matter with the ever renewed frustration caused by the anonymous criticism contained in its columns. Not that anonymous reviewing was at all characteristic of the *Athenæum* (indeed it was not), but he found it irking that the most prestigious English literary journal should give frequent evidence of narrow-mindedness and unfairness. In no place does he mention its editor, Norman MacColl (1871-1901) and his successor, Vernon Rendall (1901-1916), men of no acknowledged reputation, but he can hardly have been unaware that its owner was Sir Charles Dilke, a liberal politician and philanderer whose career was ruined by his involvement in a divorce case. It was known in literary circles that a fair portion of the reviewing in the *Athenæum* was the work of women, and Gissing suspected that many of the sadly conventional, unenlightened judgments passed on his successive books came from female pens that were none too qualified.

Marysa Demoor throws abundant light on this world and enables us to answer some important questions raised by Gissing. Her enquiry is based on a thorough study of the "marked file" of the weekly and its women contributors; it is pioneering work which shows that, for some unknown reason, only two of Gissing's novels, *New Grub Street* and *The Odd Women*, were reviewed by a woman. She was Mrs. Katharine de Mattos (1851-1939), and hers was a turbulent, unhappy life. She began to review books, mainly new fiction, for the *Athenæum* in 1886 and contributed, we are told, 1,300 book reviews in twenty-two years, sinking into

oblivion after 1908. She was a cousin of Robert Louis Stevenson, married one William Sydney de Mattos, whose sexual appetite could not be allayed within the licit framework of matrimony, and became a member of W. B. Henley's circle. Of her intellectual training, nothing apparently is known. "She never acquired the fame," Marysa Demoor observes, "which would explain her being given this influential and, indeed, remunerative job." That her criticism was "witty" would be credible if examples of her wit were given, but her wit is far to seek in her supercilious reviews of Gissing's novels, only the second of which was, it would seem, read by the author. That of *New Grub Street* is singularly unperceptive, shallow and badly written. Seen in the light of the rich comments on the novel published in the last fifty years, Mrs. de Mattos' criticism of the novel strikes one as pretentious and jejune. Her shorter assessment of *The Odd Women* is only marginally more acceptable, but it is more (negatively) interesting on account of the unintelligent, lowbrow approach to the art of fiction that it reveals. Her ideal must have approached that of the *bibliothèque rose* in France. She is as awkward in praise as in blame, her

ability to focus her attention on the merits of a novel being commensurate with the vapidness of her assessments. (*Vide* this typical sentence: “The story is anything but crude or unsympathetic, yet in the telling it is often a little inadequate.”) Gissing recorded his impression in his diary in one short sentence which shows that he at least read the review cursorily: “A good notice of *The Odd Women* in *Athenæum* – except that the fool charges me with writing ‘journalese.’”

In her comment on the nature and quality of women’s contributions to this overrated weekly, Marysa Demoor tries to steer a middle course – fortunately her task was made easier by the more adequate level of the work of some of Mrs. de Mattos’ colleagues – but she has implicitly to admit that it is trying for a sincere artist to see his work discussed by an incompetent critic: “Certain authors seemed destined to be discussed by ‘the De Mattos,’ to use Henley’s way of referring to her. Seeing that she did not scruple to utterly condemn any work under review, they may have wished for another voice to judge their efforts.” Her disappearance from the “marked file” after 1908 may well mean that Vernon Rendall, helped by authors’ protests, at long last awoke to the perky offensiveness of a mediocre contributor to the journal for which he was responsible. As will perhaps be demonstrated some day, there were also male reviewers of Gissing’s books whose abusive pieces rankled in the novelist’s mind, but of course they are outside the scope of Dr. Demoor’s study.

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This book cannot have been an easy one to write. It is pleasantly informative, well-documented as a rule and it definitely breaks new ground. Yet the overall impression it produces is one of disconnectedness – perhaps inevitably because it had in essence to be analytical. We feel the presence of well-filled index cards behind the successive paragraphs. Only about half the life of the periodical is discussed, largely because it was under the editorship of Norman MacColl that women began to play a significant role in its writing, the collaboration of Geraldine Jewsbury in former days being somewhat atypical. Because the critic’s approach is, according to the stage reached in her study, technical, historical, biographical or literary, opportunities for digressions are not lacking. For instance, the twelve pages on Emilia Frances Strong, who was in turn Mark Pattison’s wife and Charles Dilke’s, are far more informative about her personal life than about her literary achievements, especially her contributions to the *Athenæum*, of which little enough is said. Also the late years of the periodical, when it became a monthly edited by John Middleton Murry and a modernist publication, are analysed more through the difficult relationships between its contributors than through the work of its feminine staff. The demise of the *Athenæum* was a sad event, all too predictable since the days when Rendall succeeded MacColl in the editorial chair, but we are not even told how the old periodical came to be absorbed by the *Nation*, which in turn was absorbed by the *New Statesman*.

By far the most innovative chapters are those that deal with the major female contributors individually, Kate Field and Louise Chandler Moulton among the Americans, Mary Robinson (alias Mme Darmesteter, later Mme Duclaux), Augusta Webster, Millicent Garrett Fawcett and Jane Ellen Harrison among the English, but the brightest picture may well be that of Helen Zimmern, who was naturalized British at an early age and was an accomplished linguist publishing in Italian as well as in English. (Her long review of *German Home Life* published on 19 August 1876 will repay reading.) The glimpses we catch of the quarrels and disagreements there used to be among the female members of the staff are illuminating and they make the reader wish that more material were available on the social gatherings that occasionally took place on the premises of the journal. Because those women contributors were of middle-class origin, Marysa Demoor’s remarks on the life of the *Athenæum* female staff and, further on in the book, on Gissing’s representation of the literary world in *New Grub Street* cannot be taken at

their face value; she has obviously been influenced by Andrew Lang's sanguine outlook on the material condition of the professional writer, male or female. Independence was too often synonymous with freedom to starve. A close look at the lives of such writers as Clementina Black, Mathilde Blind and Jessie Fothergill would have deprived her of her own optimism, as would have an enquiry into the biographical sections of the introductions to the Victorian Fiction Research Guides issued by the University of Queensland.

Short though the book is (about 170 pages), it contains a wealth of information on a number of minor female figures that were hitherto hardly visible on the late-Victorian and Edwardian scene on account of the anonymous reviewing to which they were addicted; it also enables us to imagine what it meant to be a literary drudge at the time, but to imagine it only in part as the author's approach is not a sociological or even a social one. Physically the volume is something of an oddity, but a pleasant one, and the few aptly chosen black and white illustrations are worth more than a casual glance. Two pages of the editorial files of the *Athenæum* and the *Spectator* are reproduced, as well as five cartoons from *Punch*. Typographical accidents are not exceptional, as the one on the title page allows one to predict. Some are slightly disturbing (Ducleaux, Oswald Crawford for Crawford, Geraldine Frykstedt where Jewsbury is intended, etc.). But no reader should be more than temporarily delayed by such small blemishes in what is fundamentally a good book.

Pierre Coustillas

Adeline R. Tintner, *The Twentieth-Century World of Henry James: Changes in his Work after 1900*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000.

About twenty years ago, Adeline Tintner wrote several articles on Gissing's works which appeared not only in the *Gissing Newsletter*, but in *English Studies* and *Etudes Anglaises*. A Jamesian scholar with a record of possibly two hundred articles, on a variety of subjects, she had not yet earned that reputation of "a prolific independent Jamesian scholar" to whom we are introduced on the back cover of the present volume, the last of a series of five she has now devoted to "The Master." Part of chapter VI appeared in the *Gissing Newsletter* for July 1980, but few readers will have a sense of repetition when they read this enlarged version, which has benefited from the author's greater familiarity with the works of Henry James, though not, it

would seem, with the basic facts of Gissing's life or the new information recently supplied by the *Collected Letters*. Adeline Tintner is essentially concerned with the recycling by James of "material" that he found in Gissing's novels – *New Grub Street*, *In the Year of Jubilee* and *The Whirlpool*, but probably also *Isabel Clarendon*, *Our Friend the Charlatan*, and, more surprisingly, *Workers in the Dawn*. She demonstrates that there were "four different stages of Gissing stimulation" after James read *New Grub Street* in 1891, and she analyses the nature and extent of the Jamesian texts concerned, a dozen in all, ranging from "Sir Dominic Ferrand" to "The Bench of Desolation." It is the technique of James's recycling that is closely discussed in this sixth chapter, appropriately entitled "The Gissing Phase in Henry James: The Underclass and the 'Essentially Unheroic.'" Passing a judgment on the critic's demonstration is impossible without previously reading or rereading the Jamesian texts. Most certainly there are various resemblances that are arresting in such a degree that the notion of coincidence must be waved aside. But as far as some basic facts of, or situations in, Gissing's life are concerned we beg to disagree in at least two cases. It is extraordinary to read in the year 2000 that Gissing was "a man deprived of European contemporary education," and even more disturbing to read of his

“psychoneurotic attraction to prostitutes,” which “led him to marry not one but two prostitutes in succession, both drunkards.” The copy editor of Louisiana State University Press must have taken much of what he or she went through for granted. It is easier to agree that James “went to Gissing only for the ‘savour’ of his milieu and for the characters produced by it,” that “James’s use of Gissing material was very idiosyncratic,” that “his données are never to be confused with Gissing’s,” and that “James’s optimism in every case where he uses some of Gissing’s material is in striking contrast to the pessimism of the original.” In other words James’s borrowings from Gissing look very much like *du Gissing dénaturé*. But could it have been otherwise?

The book is well printed, and most of the illustrations, notably the views of New York a hundred years ago, are attractively reproduced. It is difficult to refrain a smile on seeing, facing each other, a photograph of the burly writer *ca* 1910 looking almost pathologically earnest, clinging to the arms of his chair, and the devastating Max Beerbohm cartoon with the verbal exchange between Henry James the Older and Henry James the Younger: “How badly you wrote!” “How badly you write!”

Pierre Coustillas

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Notes and News

Our apologies for sending the July number so late. It was a material problem at the distribution stage that was the source of the difficulty. Most subscribers will have received their copies by air mail.

The papers that were read at the International Gissing Conference in Amsterdam in September last year are to be brought out in volume form by Rodopi, the Dutch publishers. Editorial work is reported to be progressing satisfactorily, and we hope to be able to give further information to our readers in our next number.

Special Gissing Session at the MLA

Thursday, 28 December 2000, 12:00 noon-1:15 p.m.
Park Tower Suite 8226, Marriot Wardman Park,
Washington, D. C.

Programme

Constance D. Harsh, Colgate Univ.: *The Nether World:*
Social Stasis and Unsystematic Thinking
Arlene Young, Univ. of Manitoba: Money and Manhood:
Gissing’s Redefinition of Lower-Middle-Class Man
Christine DeVine, Univ. of Wisconsin Madison: Two Classes
of Story: Literature and Class in Gissing’s *Demos*
John Halperin, Vanderbilt Univ.: Moderator

Contrary to a rumour which reached us some time ago, the edition of *By the Ionian Sea* published by Marlboro in 1991 and reissued in 1996 by Northwestern University Press (625 Colfax Street, Evanston, Illinois 60208-4210) is still in print. ISBN 0-8101-6010-2.

In the last few months Gissing's name appeared several times rather unexpectedly in the

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Times Literary Supplement – on 19 May, p. 34, in a report of an auction sale, on 9 June, p. 27, in a review by Elizabeth Lowry of a book on *Conrad and Women*, and on 14 July, p. 23, in another review, by Hermione Lee of Suzanne Raitt's *May Sinclair: A Modern Victorian*.

John Keahey's book, *A Sweet and Glorious Land: Revisiting the Ionian Sea* (see July number, p. 39) has been reviewed in various places in the American press, notably in *Kirkus Reviews*, the *Library Journal*, and the *Publishers' Weekly*. It is hoped that the publishers will succeed in selling the translation rights to Italian and German publishers at the Frankfurt Book Fair.

News from the South. Maria Dimitriadou, whose translation of *Sleeping Fires* into Greek is scheduled to appear later this year, has sent us an account of the Amsterdam Conference she published in the March number of *Prooptike* (p. 4) with two illustrations, a photograph of herself near one of the canals of the city, and another of the participants in the debate about the *Collected Letters* that took place on 11 September 1999. – Mario Curreli, of the University of Pisa, has sent us No. 49 of *Bell'Italia* (April 2000) which is entirely devoted to Calabria, and invites us to discover *Il più bel paese del mondo* in its profusely illustrated pages.

With deep regret we announce the death last August of Michael Meyer, translator and biographer of Ibsen and Strindberg, whose dramatization of *The Odd Women*, performed at the Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester, in late 1992, was his most tangible link with Gissing. Michael Meyer described himself as a "gregarious loner," which he was.

* * *

Recent Publications

Articles, reviews, etc.

Allan W. Atlas, "George Gissing's Concertina," *Journal of Musicology*, Vol. XVII, no. 2, Spring 1999, pp. 304-18. A remarkable, impressively researched article by a distinguished musicologist and admirer of Gissing's works. Mainly on *Thyrza*, *The Nether World*, and "The House of Cobwebs."

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Judith Wilt, "Book Reviews," *Victorian Studies*, Spring 1999, pp. 511-12 and 550. Passages on Gissing in reviews of books by Barbara Leah Harman and Patrick Brantlinger.

James A. Means, "An Echo of Gissing in *The Waste Land*," *Notes and Queries*, March 1999, p. 66.

Harry Ricketts, *The Unforgiving Minute: A Life of Rudyard Kipling*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1999. Gissing's attitude towards Kipling is analysed on pp. 253-56. In another recent biography, *Rudyard Kipling*, by Andrew Lycett, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999, p. 317, Kipling is said to have had no known opinion of Gissing, which we can at

least provisionally confirm.

George Paston (Emily Morse Symonds), *A Writer of Books*. Introduction by Margaret D. Stetz. Afterword by Anita Miller, Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1999. *New Grub Street* and its author are mentioned several times in the critical material. The novel was first published in 1899. Publisher and editor are trying to revive interest in it. It shall be reviewed.

Helen Penn Mirwald and Martha S. Vogeler, "A Life Devoted to Music: Susan Lushington in Kingsley," *Hampshire Studies 1999* (Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society), Vol. 54, pp. 232-42. On the life of Gissing's former pupil with a photograph of her as well as a reproduction of Arthur Hughes's well-known painting "The Home Quartett," See Vol. II of the *Collected Letters*.

Paul Schlicke (ed.), *The Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Entry on Gissing on p. 249.

Diana Maltz, "Practical Aesthetics and Decadent Rationale in George Gissing," *Victorian Literature and Culture* (a semi-annual review), 2000, no. 1, pp. 55-71.

Saverio Tomaiuolo, "Recensioni," *Itinerari* (a four-monthly review), Vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 155-60. Review of Francesco Marroni's *Silverdale*. Also reviewed by Francesco Badolato in *Il Corriere di Roma*, 15 June 2000, p. 18.

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Franco Lanza, "Il mondo mediterraneo nelle lettere di un romanziere," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 28 June 2000, p. 10. Review of *La terra del sole*. The book was also reviewed by Paola Scaglione in *L'Esagono* (settimanale de la Brianza), 3 July 2000, p. 3.

Nicoletta Speltra, "Calabria segreta," *GenteViaggi*, July 2000, pp. 264-66. Gissing and Papparazzo turn up again.

Eliane Keller, "Le bon air d'Arcachon," *Bulletin de la Société historique et archéologique d'Arcachon*, Third Quarter 2000, no. 105, pp. 66-70. Partly on Gissing's stay in Arcachon, with a portrait of him in 1901. Mme Keller also quotes at some length from the Reverend Samuel Radcliff's testimony on the improvement in his health from the time he came to live in Arcachon in the 1860s.

W. Johnson, "'Antient' philosophy-science in Magna Graecia: Cassiodorus and Pythagoras and 20th c. literary travellers, Gissing and Douglas," *International Journal of Mechanical Sciences* (Pergamon), Vol. 42 (2000), pp. 2075-97. With maps and illustrations, including photographs of Gissing and Norman Douglas. A rambling, derivative article marred by gross factual errors concerning Gissing.

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Marysa Demoor, *Their Fair Share: Women, Power and Criticism in the Athenaeum, from*

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